

Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost
Rally Day & New Member Sunday
Holy Communion



9:00 a.m., September 17, 2023

Welcome to worship this morning!

If you are new to the congregation, please know that **children** are welcome to remain in worship, or take a break in our “Kid’s Korner” within the Gathering Space where the service audio is played through speakers. **Bathrooms** are located down the hall, past the church office. **Hymns** are printed in the red book (ELW) available in the pew rack.

All who desire the sacrament of Holy Communion are welcome; you may also come forward to receive a blessing. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers will direct the congregation to kneel at the altar rail. The pastor will distribute communion wafers, which you may intinct (dip) into the red wine, or white grape juice, held by communion assistants. Please **do not sip** from the chalices at this time. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or the pastor can deliver the sacrament to you.

PRELUDE: *Herzlich lieb hab' ich dich, o Herr*

Johann Friedrich Alberti

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.
I invite you to kneel or remain standing.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Most merciful God,
we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.
We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.
Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,
so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us
alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of † Jesus
Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the
Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.
Amen.

OPENING HYMN: *All Creatures, Worship God Most High!*

ELW 835 (v. 1 - 4)

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mer - cy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. **A - men.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Genesis 50:15-21

After Jacob’s death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.

A reading from Genesis:

¹⁵Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph’s brothers said, “What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?” ¹⁶So they approached Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷‘Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.’ Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, “We are here as your slaves.” ¹⁹But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.” In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

Pastor Brian

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the
 words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 18:21-35

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²¹Peter came and said to [Jesus], “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Brian

HYMN OF THE DAY: *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light*

ELW 815

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Emily Lukasiewicz

Linda Pekrul

John & Mj Sandell

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors. I invite you to kneel or remain standing.
A brief silence.

We pray for the church. Bless the missions and ministries of diverse congregations, that they uplift the good news of salvation in ways that can be understood. Help us to forgive each other, practice patience, and choose welcome over judgment. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for creation. Send rain to lands experiencing drought and healing to rivers clogged with pollution. Enrich the soil for trees and plants. Protect the crops needed to feed those who hunger. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who govern. Encourage those in positions of power to lead with empathy, practice forgiveness, and care for those who struggle. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for our neighbors who face illness of any kind. For those strained financially; for all living with chronic pain, mental illness, the disease of addiction, or otherwise afraid or in harm's way. Protect all who cry out for your help. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this congregation. Bless our Sunday School students on this Rally Day. Bless our Confirmation classes, adult forum, Bible study, centering prayer, and fellowship events. We thank you for the gift of new members in our community. Bless their lives of faith and may our community support them as we grow in you together. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For what else shall we pray...? (Worshippers may raise other prayers, aloud or silently)

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING

At this time, ushers will pass the offering plate if you desire to give a financial gift. Donations may also be given online on our website (stmatthewavon.org), or mailed to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!

OFFERTORY: *Gather Your Children*

Allan Mahnke (Text by Jaroslav J. Vajda)

Gather your children, dear Savior, in peace,
And draw us to you with your passionate pleas;
Still seek us and call us to come and be blessed
To find in your arms, Lord, safety, comfort, and rest.

Knowing you, loving you, naming you Lord,
We cluster around you, and grow by your Word,
One day to remember these moments so rare,
Of caring and closeness, just because you are there.

Love be our banner, forgiveness our theme,
Compassion our nature, your vision our dream;
Who knows what the Spirit of God yet can do,
What joy can be tasted, or what promise come true?

Host at our table in our house and yours,
Here bind us together with love that endures;
Like parents, like children, let this be our fame,
That, blest, we bless many, to the praise of your name.

Gather Your Children, text by Jaroslav J. Vajda. © 1985, Jaroslav J. Vajda. All rights reserved.

DOXOLOGY

All rise as the communion elements are brought forward.

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

OFFERING PRAYER

God of field and forest, sea and sky, you are the giver of all good things.
Sustain us with these gifts of your creation,
and multiply your graciousness in us, that the world may be fed with your love,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

And also with you.

We lift them to the Lord.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
 who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
 who preached good news to the poor,
 and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
 and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
 shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
 we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory, now and forever.

GREAT AMEN

“Amen” is sung over and over to the tune of “Amazing Grace”

LORD’S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

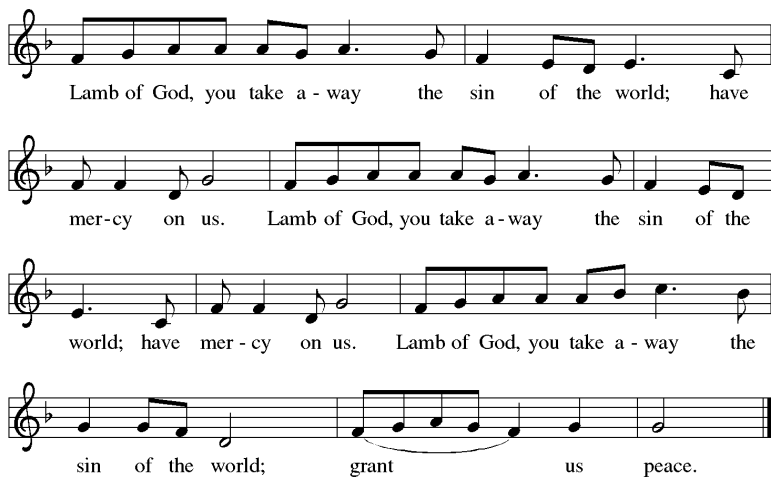
At this time, ushers will direct the congregation to approach the altar where you may kneel or stand. You will receive a communion wafer from the pastor, which you are invited to intinct (dip) into the red wine or white grape juice held by the communion assistant. Please do not sip from the chalices at this time. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or the pastor will deliver the sacrament to your seat.

Christ invites you to this table.
Come, taste and see.

THE DISTRIBUTION

The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.

AGNUS DEI



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN: *Where Charity and Love Prevail*

ELW 359

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We thank you, generous God, for the refreshment we have received at your banquet table. Send us now to spread your generosity into all the world, through the one who is our dearest treasure, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

As you go on your way may Christ go with you.
May he go before you to show you the way,
Behind you to encourage you,
Beside you to befriend,
Above you to watch over,
And within you † to give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN: *Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven*

ELW 864

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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Today’s Altar flowers are provided by Valarie Holst in memory of Jim Holst.

Please join us after today’s service for a special reception hosted by the Fellowship committee honoring Rally Day and New Member Sunday. There will be plenty for all!

MANY THANKS FOR TODAY’S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS

Ushers: Kevin Reichler

Lector: Anne Fenn

Assisting Minister & Communion Assistant: Rick Hanson

Live Stream: Perry Hasson

Altar Guild: Lynn Metz & Sue Young

STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Rajcok – pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org

Director of Music: Sarah Schiener-Redenz – music@stmatthewavon.org

Office Administrator: Paul Martin – office@stmatthewavon.org or (860) 673-3301

Sexton: Roy Zurell – contact the office

VISIT US ONLINE

Website: www.stmatthewavon.org

YouTube: @StMatthewAvon

Facebook: facebook.com/SaintMatthewLutheranChurch

Instagram: @stmatthewlutheranavon

THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday	10:20 am: Rally Day Festivities!		
Monday	OFFICE CLOSED		
Tuesday	6:00 pm: Worship & Music Committee Mtg.		
Wednesday	9:30 am & 5 pm: Weight Watchers	7:00 pm O.A.	7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

Thursday	10:00 am: Bible Study		
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday	9:00 a.m.: Sanctuary Worship with Holy Communion	10:20 am Adult Forum & Sunday School	5:00 pm Confirmation Class

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAVE THE DATE: OKTOBERTFEST, SATURDAY, OCT. 14TH

5:30 pm – 9:30 pm in the Hall of the Evangelists

The evening will include a full course German dinner featuring Sauerbraten, slow roasted pork and bratwurst coupled with, spätzle, German potato salad, red cabbage, and sauerkraut. We will get underway with appetizers, authentic adult German beverages, and other selections. Dessert will be apple strudel and Black Forest cake. We will, of course, be singing a few German songs!

As an adult event the suggested donation is \$25 per person. Invited guests are welcome. Dollars received beyond cost will be designated for our Grace Lutheran Friday Night Meal Program. Dress is casual, which includes German attire!

Sign-up will be available following the church service for the next two weeks. You may also email the office to RSVP.

THRIVENT ACTION TEAMS

Do you have insurance with Thrivent? Then you are eligible for a yearly \$250 action team grant! These can be used as seed money for church fundraisers, outreach events, and service projects. If you are a Thrivent member, please email the office and we may be able to utilize your Thrivent action team grant as a way to support ministry events at St. Matthew!

SAVE THE DATE: TAG SALE, SATURDAY, NOV. 11TH

If you are interested in helping, please email Ellen Ericson at egregory3@sbcglobal.net. A sign-up sheet will be placed on the bulletin board in October. Watch for the next meeting announcement. Donation drop off will begin Sunday, Nov.5. Many hands will be needed for this event.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

In November we will hold our annual intergenerational event, building boxes for Operation Christmas Child. If you are considering donating items for the boxes now is a great time to inexpensively stock up on school supply items. Within the next few weeks there will be plenty of back to school sales on notebooks, pens, pencils, pencil sharpeners, rulers, etc.

If you would like to donate please let Paul know what you purchase and bring into the main office where we will keep until November! Thank you for your consideration!

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE: HURRICANE IDALIA

Hurricane Idalia, the first major hurricane to make landfall in the United States this year, brought life-threatening storm surge, flooding and winds to the Big Bend region of Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas. Idalia is just the latest disaster to impact our neighbors in the United States and around the world.

Through Lutheran Disaster Response we are prepared to serve our neighbors impacted by Hurricane Idalia even as we continue to accompany partners in Maui after the wildfires and help those experiencing other disasters. We know that recovery often takes years, and through Lutheran Disaster Response we will be working with our partners for as long as needed. In moments such as this one, a gift to Lutheran Disaster Response provides crucial support where it's needed most.

If you would like to donate, you may do so by writing a check to "Lutheran Disaster Response" with *Hurricane Response* written in the memo line. This check can be placed in the offering plate on Sunday, or mailed to the church. Thank you.

St. Matthew Mission Statement:

St. Matthew Lutheran Church is a worshipping community called to proclaim God's love for all and to grow spiritually together. Challenged by Jesus' example, we strive to connect people of all ages, abilities, and needs, and to nurture them to be disciples of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to the wider community and welcome our neighbors to a life of worship, preaching, teaching, Christian care, service, and spiritual growth.

In Christ, We Are Digging Deep, Reaching Out, Changing Lives.