

*September 7, 2025*  
*13th Sunday after Pentecost*



**ST. STEPHEN**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church

\*Congregation is invited to stand as able, responses in **bold**.

Please be aware that video cameras are in use during our hybrid (combined) Worship Service and that images are being shared with the online participants.

You can receive our weekly email/letter with events and information, ways to grow in faith, opportunities for service and worship, as well as ways to support the ministry of the congregation by submitting your email address to [office@ststephenlc.org](mailto:office@ststephenlc.org) or by calling the office at 717-766-2168 and providing your email and/or your mailing address.

Called to contemplate the cost of discipleship, we might be helped by translating Paul's request to Philemon into our prayer of the day: Refresh my heart in Christ. Strengthened by the company and forgiveness of Christ in holy communion and recalling God's grace in remembrance of baptism, we can be strengthened in this hour to "choose life"—to choose life in God as our own.

### **Announcements**

### **Our Mission**

**We respond to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.**

### **Prelude**

### **Gathering**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

### **\*Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God, our maker, our helper, and our keeper.  
**Amen.**

Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Merciful and loving God,  
**we are your stiff-necked people. We trample on the needy. We grumble about your grace to others. We turn away from the poor. Have mercy on us and forgive our sins. Rejoice over us as ones who were lost and have been found.**  
**Amen.**

Even when we are faithless, God remains faithful. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. You who were lost have been found. In the name of ✙ Jesus, your sins are forgiven!  
**Amen.**

### **\*Gathering Hymn**

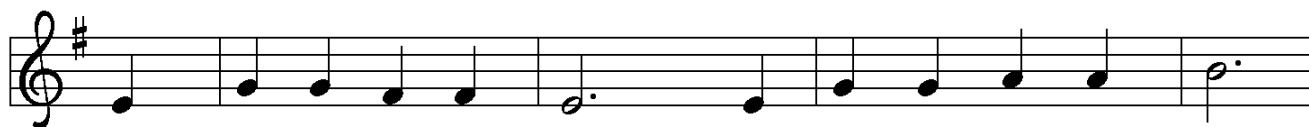
**"TBD"**

**Hymn#TBD**

### **\*Apostolic 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** (Cantor)



- 1 Have mer - cy on us, Lord, and hear our sol - emn prayer.
- 2 Have mer - cy on us, Christ, and wash a - way our sin.
- 3 Have mer - cy on us, Lord; make sin and shame de - part.



We come to hear your liv - ing word; it saves us from de - spair.  
Pour out your grace and make us whole that new life may be - gin.  
Re - new us with your sav - ing pow'r; cre - ate in us new hearts!

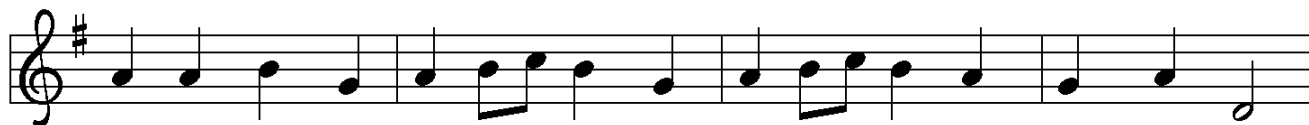
**\*Canticle of Praise**



- 1 Glo-ry be to God in heav-en; peace, good-will to all the earth.
- 2 Glo-ry be to Christ for - ev - er, Lamb of God and Lord of love.
- 3 Ho - ly One we now ac-claim you; Lord a - lone, to you we call;



Might-y God of all cre - a - tion, Fa - ther of sur - pass - ing worth:  
Son of God and gra-cious Sav - ior, you have come from heav'n a - bove;  
Ho - ly One in faith we name you, God most high, yet near to all:



we ex - alt you, we a - dore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.  
on the cross you died to save us; now you reign at God's right hand.  
Je - sus Christ, with God the Spir - it, in the Fa - ther's splen - dor bright.



Saints and an - gels bow be - fore you; here on earth our songs we raise.  
Hear our prayer; re - store, for - give us; in your prom - ise firm we stand.  
For the peace that we in - her - it, glo - ry be to God on high!

## **\*Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

**Direct us, O Lord God, in all our doings with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
Amen.**

## **Word**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

## **The First Lesson** (Lector)

## **Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

*Moses speaks to the Israelites, who are about to enter the land promised to their ancestors. In this passage, he lays out the stark choice before them: choose life by loving and obeying the Lord; or choose death by following other gods.*

A reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, the 30<sup>th</sup> chapter.

<sup>15</sup> See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

<sup>19</sup> I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Psalm** (Cantor)

### **Psalm 1**

<sup>1</sup> Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel <sup>1</sup> of the wicked,  
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats <sup>1</sup> of the scornful!

<sup>2</sup> **Their delight is in the law <sup>1</sup> of the LORD,  
and they meditate on God's teaching <sup>1</sup> day and night.**

<sup>3</sup> They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that <sup>1</sup> do not wither;  
everything they <sup>1</sup> do shall prosper.

<sup>4</sup> **It is not so <sup>1</sup> with the wicked;  
they are like chaff which the wind <sup>1</sup> blows away.**

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when <sup>1</sup> judgment comes,  
nor the sinner in the council <sup>1</sup> of the righteous.

<sup>6</sup> **For the LORD knows the way <sup>1</sup> of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked shall <sup>1</sup> be destroyed.**

*Onesimus, a new Christian and a man enslaved by Philemon, has helped Paul, who is in prison. Paul writes this letter to his friend Philemon to encourage him to receive Onesimus, upon his return, as a sibling in Christ.*

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to Philemon.

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, <sup>2</sup> to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. <sup>7</sup> I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

<sup>8</sup> For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, <sup>9</sup> yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup> I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. <sup>13</sup> I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; <sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. <sup>15</sup> Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

**\*Gospel Acclamation**



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord and Sav - ior: o - pen now your sav-ing word.



Let it burn like fire with-in us; speak un - til our hearts are stirred.



Al - le-lu - ia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.

**\*Gospel Reading**

**Luke 14:25-33**

*Jesus speaks frankly about the costs of discipleship. Those who follow him should know from the outset that completing the course of discipleship will finally mean renouncing all other allegiances.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter. **Glory to You O Lord.**

<sup>25</sup> Now large crowds were traveling with [Jesus;] and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup> “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup> saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You O Christ.**

**Sermon**

**Rev. Evan Houck**

**\*Hymn of the Day**

***“TBD”***

**HymnTBD**

**\*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.

### **\*Prayers of Intercession**

AM: Gracious God, we come to you in prayer for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for the church to follow in your ways, that it may be a witness to your love for all people. Help us choose all that is life-giving and confront the forces of death. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for creation, that it may be cherished and nurtured. Sustain farmlands, animals, and waters; restore places affected by calamities; and shield coastlands from rising seas. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for those in authority. Grant them wisdom to govern justly and compassion to care for the marginalized. Equip them for actions that further the common good. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for those who are sick, hungry, unhoused, or lonely. May they find healing through your love and the care of those around them. Lead us to be your hands and feet in the world. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for this congregation, that we may be united in love and faith. Refresh our hearts in Christ, and deepen our support of one another. We pray that our sharing of faith may transform lives. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

We thank you for those who have died and now dwell with the saints. Surround them with your divine mercy, that they find peace and rest in your loving embrace. God of grace,  
**receive our prayer.**

We entrust these prayers to you, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and friend.  
**Amen.**

### **\*Peace**

The Peace of Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**  
Let us show a sign of that peace!

### **Offering**

*(Please refer to the back of the bulletin for various options to give.)*

### **Anthem**

### **\*Doxology**

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.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637-1711

### **\*Offertory Prayer**

Let us pray.

Lord of the harvest, we return to you a portion of what you have given to us. Turn us to set our hope not on the uncertainty of riches, but on you, who richly provides for us. Multiply what we have gathered to bless all who are suffering and in need, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **Meal**

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

(Zoom participants—please prepare your elements for communion.)

### **\*The Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

### **Preface**

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. You reveal your glory as the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, one Lord, one God, ever to be adored in your eternal glory. 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-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. 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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

## Thanksgiving at the Table

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.

**Amen.**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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**

Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. Come to this meal of mercy.

1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;

you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.



**\*Communion of the Faithful**

**\*Post Communion Blessing**

The God of righteousness, who gives justice to the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry, who sets the prisoners free, ✚ bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**\*Post Communion Cantic**

***“Now, Lord”***

**Hymn#201**

**\*Post Communion Prayer**

Let us pray.

O God, through this meal you have strengthened us and appointed us to be your servants. Send us to do good and to share our possessions with all in need. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**\*Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

**Amen.**

**\*Sending Hymn**

***“TBD”***

**Hymn#TBD**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Do not lose heart.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

We thank our choir members and worship helpers who served today.



The offering, whether in person or through digital means, is an act of worship. Worship, at its core, is a reverent love and devotion accorded to God. We give because God loves us first, and we are called to love God and neighbor as a result. The offering is one way we show our love of God.

The offerings are used to carry out the ministry of the church, to share the Good News, to provide pastoral care, to worship as a community, and to create an environment where Jesus encounters people and their lives are transformed. All of these things continue to take place. Thank you for your generosity.

There are several ways to make your offering:

Go to [www.StStephenLC.org](http://www.StStephenLC.org) and click on the DONATE button (or the Giving tab for more options.)

Text your offering dollar amount to 717-685-6947. Text "help" for options.

Set up regular electronic offerings by contacting our office manager, at 717-766-2168, Monday through Wednesday from 9am – 2pm, or by email at [office@StStephenLC.org](mailto:office@StStephenLC.org).

Mail in your check, made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Our address is:

30 W. Main St., PO Box 266, New Kingstown, PA 17072.

**Use Engage** from your smart phone or Internet connected device at <https://engage.suran.com/ssl/> or QR code below:



Select giving fund(s) and enter amount(s). Furnish any additional information in "Gift Memo" box on the submit screen.

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