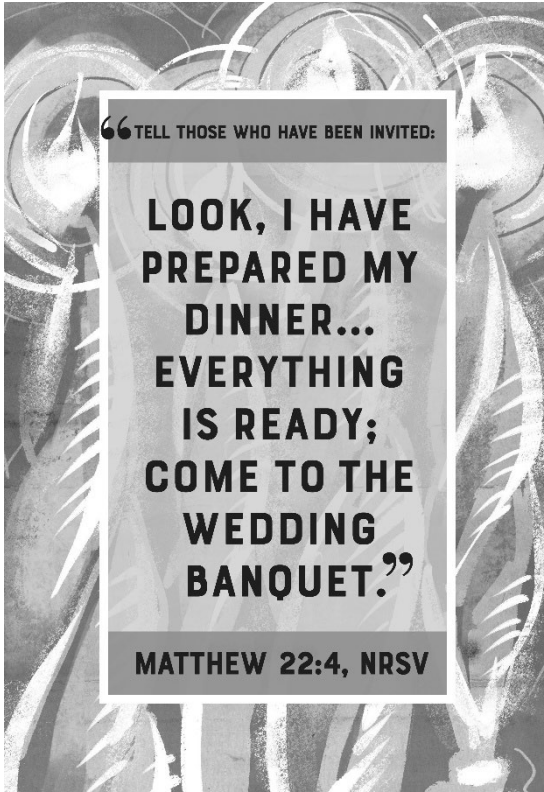


# Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✠ Holy Communion ✠

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 11, 2026

**TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

*In Isaiah we are given a vision of the great feast to come, when God will wipe away death forever. In Jesus' parable about a great banquet, those invited do not come, so the invitation is extended to others. In our liturgy God spreads a table before us. Even amid anxiety and hardship we rejoice in the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. With great joy we feast at the table of the Lord, and we go forth to share the wonderful invitation with others hungering and thirsting for the abundant life of God.*

**GATHERING****PRELUDE**

*Stand*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

**P:** In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C:** Amen.

**P:** Let us pray...

Dear Father in Heaven—to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we might perfectly love you and worthily magnify your Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C:** Amen.

**P:** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the Truth is not in us. But we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore, let confess all our sins to God, so that we may hear his forgiveness and know his mercy...

*Kneel*

*Silence is kept for meditation...*

**P:** Almighty God, merciful Father:

**C:** I have sinned against you in thought, in word, and in deed;

By what I have done and what I have left undone.

I have not loved you with my whole heart, mind, and strength.

I have not loved my neighbor as myself.

For the sake of your beloved Son, who suffered upon the cross for me, have mercy upon me and forgive me all my sin!

**P:** Almighty God, our Father in Heaven, has given his Son to die for us, and for his sake forgives us all our sin. As a Called and Ordained minister of the Church of Jesus Christ, and by his authority, I declare to you the forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C:** Amen.

*Stand*

**GATHERING HYMN*****Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies***

1 Christ, whose glo - ry fills the skies, Christ, the true and on - ly light,  
 2 Dark and cheer-less is the morn un - ac - com - pa - nied by thee;  
 3 Vis - it then this soul of mine, pierce the gloom of sin and grief;

Sun of righ-teous-ness, a - rise, tri - umph o'er the shades of night;  
 joy-less is the day's re - turn, till thy mer-cy's beams I see,  
 fill me, ra - dian - cy di - vine, scat-ter all my un - be - lief;

Day-spring from on high, be near; Day - star, in my heart ap - pear.  
 till they in - ward light im - part, glad my eyes, and warm my heart.  
 more and more thy - self dis - play, shin - ing to the per - fect day.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788

Music: RATISBON, J. G. Werner, *Choralbuch*, 1815**APOSTOLIC GREETING**

**[P]:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**[C]:** And also with you.

**KYRIE**

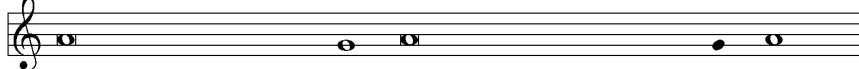
**[A]** In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **[C]** Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



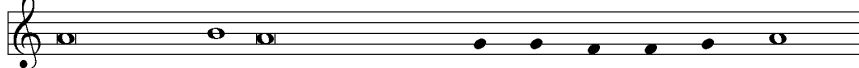
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,



and for the u - ni - ty of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor - ship and praise,



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

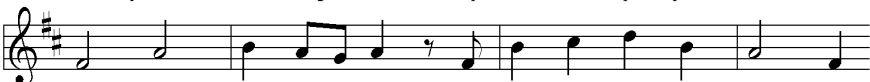


Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra-cious Lord. A - men

## HYMN OF PRAISE



Glo-ry to God in the high - est, and peace to his peo - ple on earth.



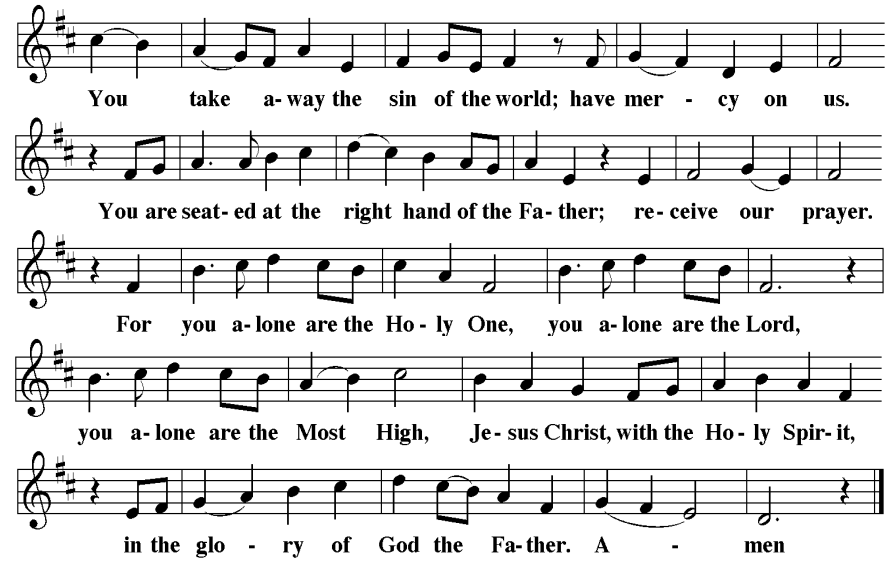
Lord God, heav - en - ly king, al - might - y God and Fa - ther:



We wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God:



You take away the sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

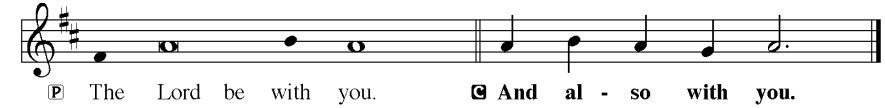
You are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther; re-ceive our prayer.

For you a-lone are the Ho - ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,

you a-lone are the Most High, Je-sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir-it,

in the glo - ry of God the Fa-ther. A - men

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**



**P** The Lord be with you. **A** And al - so with you.

**P**: Let us pray.

Lord of the feast, you have prepared a table before all peoples and poured out your life with abundance. Call us again to your banquet. Strengthen us by what is honorable, just, and pure, and transform us into a people of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C**: Amen.

*Sit*

**WORD****FIRST READING: Isaiah 25:1-9**

*After a hymn of praise acknowledging God as a shelter for the poor, the prophet portrays a wonderful victory banquet at which death—which in ancient Canaan was depicted as a monster swallowing up everyone—will be swallowed up forever. The prophet urges celebration of this victory of salvation.*

**A:** A Reading from Isaiah:

- <sup>1</sup> O LORD, you are my God;  
I will exalt you; I will praise your name,  
for you have done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
- <sup>2</sup> For you have made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of foreigners is a city no more;  
it will never be rebuilt.
- <sup>3</sup> Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.
- <sup>4</sup> For you have been a refuge to the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.  
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm,  
<sup>5</sup> the noise of foreigners like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.
- <sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.
- <sup>7</sup> And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the covering that is spread over all nations;  
<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.
- Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.
- <sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day,  
“See, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

**A:** The word of the Lord.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

**PSALM: Psalm 23***Sung by the cantor and repeated by the congregation.**Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.*

<sup>1</sup>The LORD | is my shepherd;  
I shall not | be in want.

<sup>2</sup>**He makes me lie down | in green pastures\***  
**and leads me be- | side still waters.**

<sup>3</sup>He re- | vives my soul\*  
and guides me along right pathways | for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I**  
**shall | fear no evil;**  
**for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they | comfort me.**

<sup>5</sup>You spread a table before me in the presence of those who | trouble me;  
you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is | running over.

<sup>6</sup>**Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days | of**  
**my life,**  
**and I will dwell in the house of the | LORD forever. R**

**SECOND READING: Philippians 4:1-9**

*Though writing from prison and facing an uncertain future, Paul calls on the Philippians to rejoice and give thanks to God no matter what the circumstance. God's peace is with us and binds together our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, especially when things around us do not seem peaceful.*

**[A]:** A Reading from Philippians:

<sup>1</sup>My brothers and sisters,  
whom I love and long for, my joy and crown,  
stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

<sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion,  
help these women,  
for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel,  
together with Clement and the rest of my coworkers,

whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

<sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

The Lord is near.

<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything,

but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.

<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,  
whatever is just, whatever is pure,  
whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable,  
if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise,  
think about these things.

<sup>9</sup> Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received  
and heard and seen in me,  
and the God of peace will be with you.

**A** The word of the Lord.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

*Stand*

### **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.

**CANTOR:** This is the LORD for whom <sup>1</sup> we have waited; let us be glad and  
rejoice in <sup>1</sup> God's salvation.

**C:** Repeat the Alleluias.

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 22:1-14**

*Jesus tells a parable indicating that the blessings of God's kingdom are available to all, but the invitation is not to be taken lightly.*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the twenty-second chapter.

Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:  
<sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.  
<sup>3</sup> He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come.  
<sup>4</sup> Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’  
<sup>5</sup> But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business,  
<sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.  
<sup>7</sup> The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.  
<sup>8</sup> Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.  
<sup>9</sup> Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’  
<sup>10</sup> Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.  
<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe,  
<sup>12</sup> and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless.  
<sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’  
<sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.”

**[P]:** The Gospel of the Lord.



Sit

**SERMON**.....**Pastor Kliner**

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness.....LBW 302



1 Je - sus, your blood and righ - teous - ness my beau - ty  
2 Bold shall I stand in that great day, cleansed and re -  
3 Lord, I be - lieve your pre - cious blood, which at the  
4 Lord, I be - lieve, were sin - ners more than sands up -



are, my glo - rious dress; mid flam - ing worlds, in these ar -  
deemed, no debt to pay; for by your cross, ab - solved I  
mer - cy seat of God pleads for the cap - tives' lib - er -  
on the o - cean shore, you have for all a ran - som



rayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.  
am from sin and guilt, from fear and shame.  
ty, was al - so shed in love for me.  
paid, for all a full a - tone - ment made.

- 5 When from the dust of death I rise  
to claim my mansion in the skies,  
this then shall be my only plea:  
Christ Jesus lived and died for me.
- 6 Then shall I praise you and adore  
your blessed name forevermore,  
who once, for me and all you made,  
an everlasting ransom paid.

Text: Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf, 1700–1760; tr. John Wesley, 1703–1791, alt.  
Music: O JESU CHRISTE, WAHRES LICHT, *Gesang-Buch*, Nürnberg, 1676

APOSTLES' CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again 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**

*A brief silence is held after the introduction.*

**P:** Let us pray for the Church, the world, and all people according to their need...

*After each petition:*

**P:** Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** **hear our prayer.**

*The prayers conclude:*

**P:** All these things, most merciful God, we commend into your hands, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C:** **Amen!**

**PEACE**

**P:** The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C:** **And also with you.**

*The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

Peace be with you. R: Peace be with you

*Sit*

***MEAL***

**OFFERING**

*The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.*

**Anthem**

***This is My Father's World..... Vicki Hancock Wright***

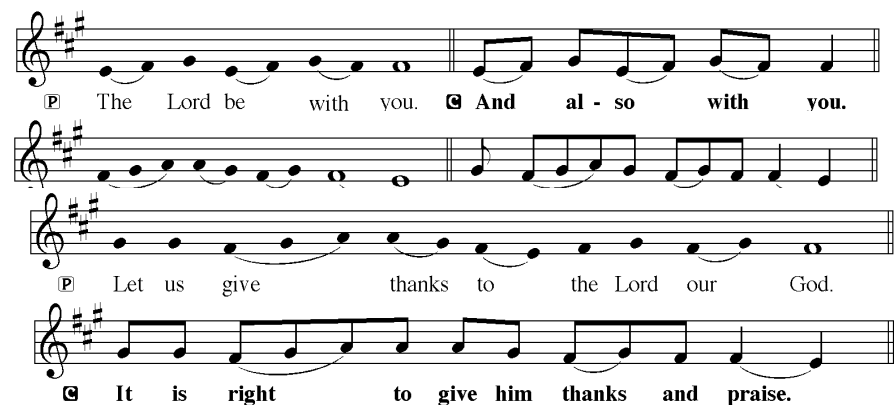
*Stand*

**OFFERTORY HYMN***As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung*


Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
 bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be  
 fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -  
 nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your  
 pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

**OFFERING PRAYER****[A]:** Let us pray... Merciful Father,

**[C]:** We offer you with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—ourselves, our time, and our possessions—signs of your gracious Love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself to us, + Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**GREAT THANKSGIVING**


The Lord be with you. **[C]** And al - so with you.  
 Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
 It is right to give him thanks and praise.

**PREFACE**

It is indeed right and salutary, that we should at all times and in all places, offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, Holy Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord; 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 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, Lord God of pow'r 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.

**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

**P:** Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Heavenly Father: endless is your mercy, and eternal is your reign. You have filled all creation with light and life; heaven and earth are full of your glory!

Through Abraham you promised to bless all nations. You rescued Israel, your chosen people. Through the Prophets, you renewed your promise; and at this, the end of the ages, you sent your only begotten Son, who in words and deeds proclaimed your Kingdom and was obedient to your will, even to giving his life upon the Cross.

Send your Holy Spirit upon these the gifts of your Church, that they may be for us the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us who receive our Lord's Body and Blood live to the praise of your glory and receive our inheritance with all your Saints in Light.

**C Amen! Come Holy Spirit!**

**P:** For, in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying:

TAKE AND EAT.

THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

After supper He took the cup. Again, he gave thanks and praise to you and gave it them to drink saying:

DRINK OF THIS, ALL OF YOU:

THIS CUP IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT.

IT WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

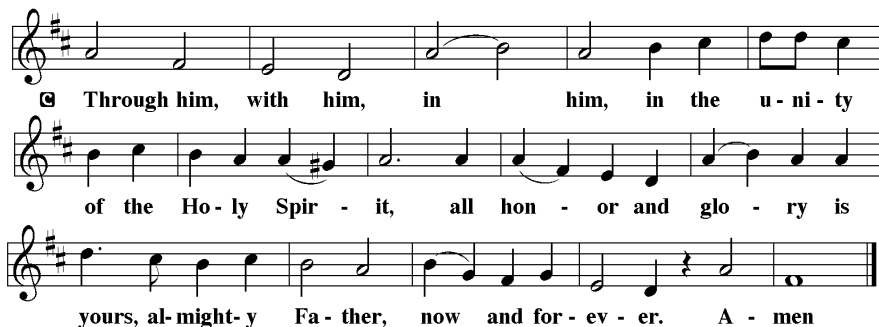
For as often as we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again in his glory!

**C Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!**

**P:** And so, Father Most Holy, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious Resurrection and his ascension into heaven, we pray: Look with favor on your Church, and see him whose death has reconciled us to yourself. Grant that we who are nourished by our Lord's body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ Jesus, and believing the witnesses of his Resurrection, be sustained in the Faith and Hope of our Lord's coming in power and glory to share with us the great and promised Feast.

**C Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!**

**P:** Join now our prayers with those of your servants of every time and every place, and unite them with the prayers of the Faithful throughout the ages—the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Holy Apostles and Martyrs, and all your Saints in Light who lived and died in Faith. Strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church here on earth—together with our Bishops, Pastors, Deacons and the entire people your son has won for you through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Welcome into your Kingdom all our departed brothers and sisters, and all who have left this world in your friendship. Unite all these prayers with the ceaseless petitions of our great high priest, Jesus Christ, until he comes as Victorious Lord of all...

**LORD'S PRAYER**

**P:** Let us pray with confidence in the words that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us...

**C:** 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



**C** 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, grant us peace.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

- The Pastor lifts the Bread and Chalice and says:*
- P:** Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
- C:** Thanks be to God!
- P:** The Holy Things for the Holy people:
- C:** One is Holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God!

Sit

COMMUNION

*All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:*

**The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.**  
*The communicant may say: Amen*

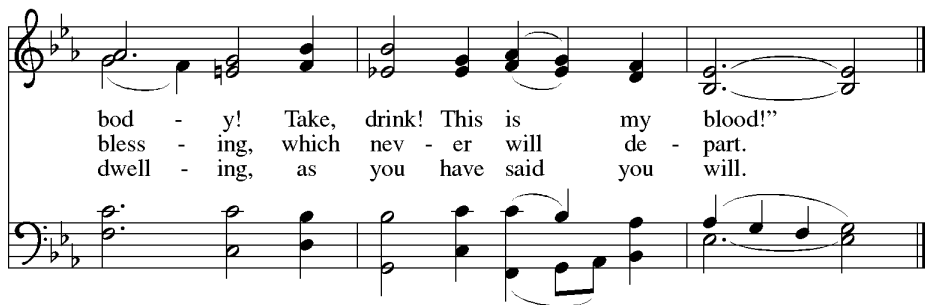
COMMUNION HYMN      Around You, O Lord Jesus



1 A - round you, O Lord Je - sus, your own you gath - er still  
2 We hear your in - vi - ta - tion, and heed, O Lord, your call;  
3 We are your own for - ev - er; un - til our fi - nal breath

to share the feast you give us with grace our lives to fill.  
your word of con - so - la - tion is spo - ken here to all.  
we will be true and nev - er— in joy, in grief, in death—

You say to us so lov - ing - ly, "Take, eat! This is my  
It draws us to your lov - ing heart; it brings to us your  
de - part from you, for you are still a - mong your peo - ple



bod - y! Take, drink! This is my blood!"  
 bless - ing, which nev - er will de - part.  
 dwell - ing, as you have said you will.

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. composite  
 Music: O JESU, ÅN DE DINA, H. Thomassön, *Den danske Psalmebog*, 1569  
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

*Stand*

**P:** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C:** Amen.

### **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

**A:** Let us pray

Let us pray... Father in Heaven, you provide the true Bread from heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that we who have received the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, may abide in him, and he in us, so that we might abound in Faith, Hope, and Love; to the glory of your name.

**C:** Amen.

### ***SENDING***

### **BENEDICTION**

**P:** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and gracious unto you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. And may almighty God—the Father, ✠ The Son, and The Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**C:** Amen.

**SENDING HYMN*****O God, Our Help in Ages Past***

1 O God, our help in a - ges past, our hope for years to come,  
 2 Un - der the shad - ow of your throne your saints have dwelt se - cure;  
 3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood or earth re - ceived its frame,  
 4 A thou - sand a - ges in your sight are like an eve - ning gone,

our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:  
 suf - fi - cient is your arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.  
 from ev - er - last - ing you are God, to end - less years the same.  
 short as the watch that ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
 soon bears us all away;  
 we fly forgotten, as a dream  
 dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,  
 our hope for years to come,  
 still be our guard while troubles last  
 and our eternal home!

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748, alt.  
 Music: ST. ANNE, William Croft, 1678–1727

**DISMISSAL**

**A**: Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.

**C**: Thanks be to God.

**POSTLUDE**

### **SERVICE ASSISTANTS**

**Ushers:** Carl Gee, Jody Fullmer, Paul Ulrich, Dave and Rita Strickler, Jimmy Gardner; **Lay Assistant:** Carola Storrs; **Comm. Assist.:** Susan Bryan **Acolyte:** Weston Sherman; **Altar Guild:** Rita Strickler, Lauren Russell; **Greeters/Presenters:** Carol Waltz, Barb Waltz  
**Cantor:** Bob Schweppenheiser; **Flower Delivery:** Susan Bryan

### **IN BLESSED MEMORY**

**The Altar Flowers** are given to the Glory of God and in loving honor of family birthdays this month with love the Jansson Family.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Welcome to Messiah Church!** It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name & information to a congregation member. We hope to see you again.

**Bible Study is Wednesday's at 6:30 pm.** All are welcome.

**MLP Gift Card Bingo** is Saturday, October 24 at 11:30 am. Presale tickets are \$20 and at the door \$25. Tickets are available before and after worship or *anytime in the church office.*

**MISSION TO SEAFARERS** - All Items collected need to be at the church by October 26<sup>th</sup>. *Thank you.*

**Today is the last day for nominations for Congregation Council, Audit Committee and the Nominating Committee.** If you feel called to serve or would like to nominate someone please contact Sue Christ, Chuck Luppert, Rita Strickler or the church office.

**Messiah's Women of the ELCA** will meet in Shaheen Hall on **Tuesday, October 13**, at 7:00 p.m. The program will be a continuation of our "Women in History" project. Lauren Russell will present **Sacajawea**, the Indian girl who guided the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Marilyn Winter will tell us about **Clara Barton**, the Founder of the American Red Cross. Georgette Copp will lead Devotions; Barb Houseknecht and Susan Nadeau are Hostesses. Everyone is welcome!

**WELCA members will be packing cookie tins** and other goodies on November 17. We need names and addresses of Messiah's college students and military personnel. Please give this information to the Church Office as soon as possible. Closer to the time we'll also solicit cookies and other packable foods from the congregation and hope you will contribute generously. Thanks!

**MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Rev. Gerald Kliner, STS, Senior Pastor**  
**JARED GIST, ORGANIST**

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### **Welcomed In**

A crowd gathered in the church basement like they did every third Thursday of the month. They walked past the kitchen window. They grabbed their plates. They filled up cups of ice water and coffee and swung by the dessert table on their way to folding chairs situated around circular folding tables throughout the room. Conversations bubbled up as old friends greeted each other around the free meal provided, as it was every month. Everyone was welcome, no questions asked.

This image of a free meal in the church basement, attended by any and all comers, is reminiscent of the wedding feast the king gives in today's parable. When those who are invited fail to show up, the king sends his servants out into the entire surrounding countryside to bring to the meal any and all who will attend. The king doesn't check credentials; the king doesn't ask questions. The joy of the wedding feast is open to all.

The parable tells us of one guest without a wedding robe, who winds up outside the joy of the feast. This can cause us to worry or despair. Do we have a wedding robe fit for the kingdom of heaven? What happens to us if we do not? Our baptism in Jesus, however, reminds us that we have no need to fear. We have been clothed not with a robe but with the grace of Jesus, which assures us that we, who have been gathered into the feast of the reign of God, have a place and an inheritance among God's people. Gathered around that table of grace, we too are sent to share the good news and welcome others into the reality of God's reign.

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