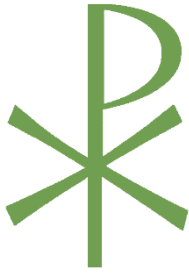


Welcome to Worship  
St. Luke's Evangelical  
Lutheran Church



September 24, 2023



Disciples and Ministers: *All the People*  
Interim Pastor: *Rob Johnson*  
NWOS Bishop: *Daniel Beaudoin*  
ELCA Presiding Bishop: *Elizabeth Eaton*  
Companion Church: *Mwanawotta, Tanzania*  
Web Page: <http://www.stlukesnb.org>  
eMail: [StLukesNB@gmail.com](mailto:StLukesNB@gmail.com)  
Pastor Rob's phone: 419-913-7506

*Whether this is your first time with us or you have been here your whole life, **WELCOME** to the place where we stand together before God as equals. If you are new here and seeking a church home, please contact the church office at 419-257-3253 and leave a message.*

## **Assisting in Worship**

Organist: *Janet Goldner*  
Scripture Reader and Prayer Leader: *JoLynn Stewart*  
Acolyte: *Avery Wymer*  
Ushers: *Jace McCartney, Guy McCartney*  
Videographer: *Beth Williams*

## **To the Glory of God**

October Candles: *Ruth McKee*  
October Bulletins: *Nancy & Jim Wymer*  
October Newsletter: *Nancy & Jim Wymer*

**Choir** rehearsals each Sunday @ 9:30 a.m. You may join us anytime. Everyone age 16 and older is invited to join us. Come and lift your voice in praise to God.

**Remember** to stop by the Narthex today and have your picture taken for the picture directory. Today is your last opportunity. You may submit a picture to Pam Van Mooy @ [pvanmooy@gmail.com](mailto:pvanmooy@gmail.com) or drop one by the church office. Thank you



# Order of Worship

Sunday, September 24, 2023

*God is glad you have joined us for worship today. At the symbol ✠ assembly members may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked upon us at baptism.*

*\*please stand, sit, or kneel as you feel comfortable.*

*Pandemic update: we will continue monitoring the CDC and following their guidelines.*

---

## GOD GATHERS US

---

### GREETING

### PRELUDE WITH SILENT MEDITATIVE PRAYER

*Use your breath as a form of prayer as you listen to the music. When you breathe in, pray, "Gracious God." When you exhale, pray, "open my heart."*

### SHARING OF THE PEACE

Leader: The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**ALL: and also with you**

*Please share God's peace using the "peace sign."*

### AN OFFERING OF CONFESSION

Leader: Blessed be the ✠ One God who, like a farmer, plants the seeds of wisdom, faith, and joy in our hearts, so that we may reap a harvest of new life.

**ALL: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: if I say I have no sin, I deceive myself and the truth is not in me. However, if I confess my sins, you are faithful and just. Forgive me. Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*In your heart and your spirit, confess to God your fears, your anger, your greed, and your disappointments. Lift up the names of people whom you've hurt recently.*

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

Leader: Hear these words and believe in their power: Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

*1 John 1:9; James 5:16*

**\*GATHERING HYMN #781**

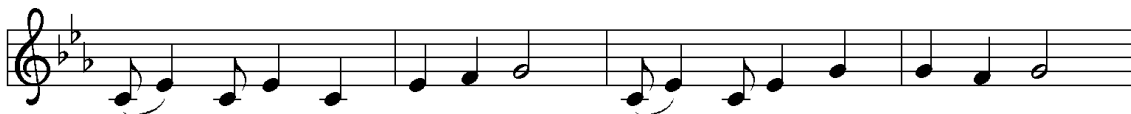
CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

**\*CONFESSIONAL RESPONSE**

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ..... with you all.

**ALL: and also with you.**

**\*KYRIE HYMN #151**



1, 3	Ky - ri - e	e - le - i - son.	Ky - ri - e	e - le - i - son.
2	Chris - te	e - le - i - son.	Chris - te	e - le - i - son.
1, 3	Lord, . . . . .	have mer - cy.	Lord, . . . . .	have mer - cy.
2	Christ, . . . . .	have mer - cy.	Christ, . . . . .	have mer - cy.



Ky - ri - e	e - le - i - son.	Ky - ri - e	e - le - i - son.
Chris - te	e - le - i - son.	Chris - te	e - le - i - son.
Lord, . . . . .	have mer - cy.	Lord, . . . . .	have mer - cy.
Christ, . . . . .	have mer - cy.	Christ, . . . . .	have mer - cy.

## \*GLORY TO GOD

SETTING #2 HYMNAL PAGE 121

## \*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Leader: Let us pray:

**ALL: O God our rock, you offer us a covenant of mercy, and you provide the foundation of our lives. Ground us in your word, and strengthen our resolve to be your disciples, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

---

# GOD SPEAKS TO US

---

## PROPHETIC READING

JONAH 3:10-4:11

Reader: When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

<sup>4:1</sup> This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. <sup>2</sup> So he complained to the LORD about it: “Didn’t I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. <sup>3</sup> Just kill me now, LORD! I’d rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen.”

<sup>4</sup> The LORD replied, “Is it right for you to be angry about this?”

<sup>5</sup> Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see what would happen to the city. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah’s head, shading him from the sun. This eased his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

<sup>7</sup> But God also arranged for a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant so that it withered away. <sup>8</sup> And as the sun

grew hot, God arranged for a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. “Death is certainly better than living like this!” he exclaimed.

<sup>9</sup> Then God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?”

<sup>10</sup> Then the LORD said, “You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. <sup>11</sup> But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn’t I feel sorry for such a great city?”

Reader: Word of God, word of life. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

## **PSALM READING**

*(responsively)*

PSALM 145:1-8

Reader: I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

**ALL: Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.**

Reader: Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

**ALL: One generation shall extol your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.**

Reader: They will recount the glorious<sup>[a]</sup> splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works I will meditate

**ALL: They will proclaim the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.**

Reader: They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

**ALL: The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

Reader: Word of God, word of life. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

## DISCIPLESHIP READING

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30

READER: For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. <sup>22</sup> But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So, I really don't know which is better. <sup>23</sup> I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. <sup>24</sup> But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

<sup>25</sup> Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. <sup>26</sup> And when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.

Live as Citizens of Heaven

<sup>27</sup> Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. <sup>28</sup> Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. <sup>29</sup> For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. <sup>30</sup> We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

Reader: Word of God, word of life. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

### \*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION HYMN #172

Hal-le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal -  
- le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le -  
lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah.

## \*GOSPEL READING

MATTHEW 20:1-16

*Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve*

Leader: There is good news for us this day and it comes to us from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 20. **ALL: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Leader: “For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

<sup>3</sup> “At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. <sup>5</sup> So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o’clock he did the same thing.

<sup>6</sup> “At five o’clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’

<sup>7</sup> “They replied, ‘Because no one hired us.’

“The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’

<sup>8</sup> “That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in and pay them, beginning with the last workers first. <sup>9</sup> When those hired at five o’clock were paid, each received a full day’s wage. <sup>10</sup> When those hired first came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more. But they, too, were paid a day’s wage. <sup>11</sup> When they received their pay, they protested to the owner, <sup>12</sup> ‘Those people worked only one hour, and yet you’ve paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.’

<sup>13</sup> “He answered one of them, ‘Friend, I haven’t been unfair! Didn’t you agree to work all day for the usual wage? <sup>14</sup> Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. <sup>15</sup> Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?’



16 “So those who are last now will be first then, and those who are first will be last.”

Leader: The gospel of the Lord. **All: Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **\*THE APOSTLES’ CREED**

**ALL: 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**

### **THE MESSAGE**

#### **\*HYMN OF THE DAY #574**

HERE I AM, LORD

#### **\*PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE INTRODUCTION**

Prayer Leader: Remembering the caring and generous works of God, we pray for the church, creation, and the needs of our neighbors.

#### **\*PRAYER SONG HYMN #752**

LORD, LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN PRAYING



Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, Lord, send your Spir-it in this place;



Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, send us love, send us pow’r, send us grace.

## \*PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Prayer Leader: Merciful God, **ALL: receive our prayer.**

We pray for Kolton, Ron, Mike, Cheryl, John, Fred, Shirley, Larry, Bob, Caroline, Marilyn, Bertha, Jim, Barb, Isabella, Mary Ann, Kevin, Shirley, Cheryl, A.J., Mavery, Caroline, Ethan, Brent, Richard, Deanna, Laura, Michael, Cindy, John, Gary, Paul, Sue, Teresa, Doug, Betty, David, LuAnn, Colene, Eva, Braxton, Eric, Lisa, Chris, Arlene, Logan, Don, Beth, Ashley, Holly, Tessa, Riker, Kelly, Al, Pat, Dan, and Cooper.

## \*PRAYER SONG HYMN #752

LORD, LISTEN TO YOUR CHILDREN PRAYING



Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, Lord, send your Spir-it in this place;



Lord, lis-ten to your chil-dren pray-ing, send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

## INVITATION FOR OFFERINGS

### OFFERTORY

## \*OFFERTORY RESPONSE #182

LET THE VINEYARDS BE FRUITFUL



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles-sing. 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 the dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

## \*OFFERING PRAYER

Leader: Let us pray.

**ALL: 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.**

---

# GOD NOURISHES US

---

## \*THE TABLE PRAYER

Leader: God of all creation, all you have made is good.

**ALL: Your love endures forever. You bring forth bread from the earth and fruit from the vine. Nourish me with these gifts. Use me and what I have gathered to feed the world with your love, through the feast of love and bread of life, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## \*THE EXHORTATION

SETTING #2 HYMNAL PAGE 133

Leader: 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, Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life.

**ALL: Blessed is the Lord, the God of the universe. God's faithfulness endures from age to age. Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise the Lord in the heights above. Praise the Lord, sun and moon; praise**

**the Lord, all you shining stars. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, and stormy winds. Praise the Lord, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for they were created.** *Psalm 148*

Leader: We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life, and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Shower us with your Spirit, and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love. And so, with all the universe and the hosts of heaven, we join in praise and sing....

**\*SANCTUS**

SETTING #2 HYMNAL PAGE 130



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav-en 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.

**\*WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Leader: In the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, gave a piece to each disciple and said

**ALL: This is my body, given for you. Do this and remember me.**

Leader: Again, after supper, Jesus took a cup of wine, gave thanks; and gave it to each disciple to drink, saying

**ALL: This is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. Do this and remember me.**

Leader: We proclaim the mystery of faith:

**ALL: Sin is conquered! Death is defeated! Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.**

Leader: God of resurrection and new life: pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine

**ALL: Grace this table with your presence. Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.**

## **\*THE PRAYER OUR LORD TAUGHT US**

**All: 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**



## **\*SPIRITUAL COMMUNION PRAYER**

*Please join in prayer if you are unable to receive the elements.*

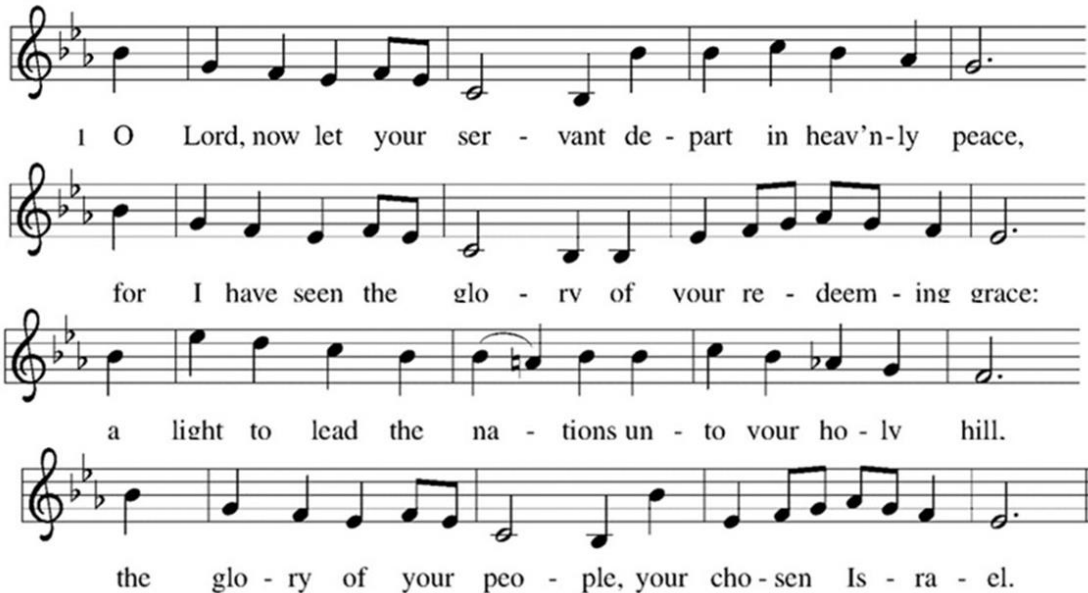
**ALL: Forgiving and faithful God, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed and Holy Sacrament. Your Spirit fills my spirit, allowing it to bloom like a flower in spring. Since I cannot now receive You through bread and wine, come spiritually into my heart. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a forgiving spirit within me. Amen.**

## DISTRIBUTION

### \*HYMN AFTER COMMUNION #313

VERSE 1

O Lord, Now Let Your Servant



1 O Lord, now let your ser - vant de - part in heav'n - ly peace,  
for I have seen the glo - ry of your re - deem - ing grace:  
a light to lead the na - tions un - to your ho - ly hill.  
the glo - ry of your peo - ple, your cho - sen Is - ra - el.

### \*PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

Leader: Please join me in the absolution,

**ALL:** God of abundance, with this bread of life and cup of salvation you have united us with Christ, making us one with all your people. Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your redeeming love to the world and continue forever in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

---

## GOD SENDS US

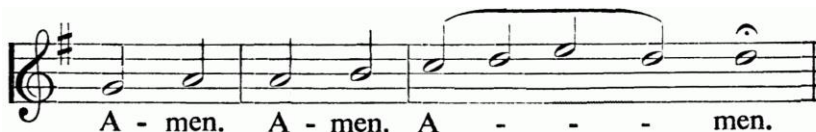
---

### \*BLESSING

SETTING #2 HYMNAL PAGE 136-137

In the name of the Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit.

## \*THE AMEN



## \*SENDING HYMN #543

GO, MY CHILDREN, WITH MY BLESSING

## \*DISMISSAL

SETTING #2 HYMNAL PAGE 137

*We are sent to serve others.*

## POSTLUDE

**ELCA “Hunger Appeal” Offering** - Each week as we leave worship, we remember the poor by placing loose change offerings in the “hunger bowls” on the Information Table in the Narthex.

---

### TODAY’S WORSHIP COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

---

Designated liturgical music text, Prayers of the People, back-page devotions are from *Sundays and Seasons.com* © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. Reprinted by permission: Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS18497. All rights reserved.

#### Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-717176:

“*Children of the Heavenly Father*” TEXT: Carolina Sandbell Berg, 1832-1908; tr. Ernst W. Olson, 1870-1958 Music: Swedish folk tune  
TEXT © 195 Board of Publications, Lutheran Church in America

“*Kyrie*” TEXT: Dinah Reindorf, b.c. 1927 Music: 1987 Dinah Reindorf, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

“*Halle, Halle, Hallelujah*” TEXT: Caribbean Traditional; arr. Nark Sedio, b. 1954 Arr. ©1995 Augsburg Fortress

“*Here I Am, Lord*” TEXT: Daniel L. Schutte, b. 1946 Music: Daniel L. Schutte, TEXT AND MUSIC © 1981 OCP Publications, Inc

“*Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying*” TEXT: Ken Medema, by. 1943 Music: Ken Medmema Text and Music © 1973 Hope Publishing Company

“*Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*” TEXT: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923 Text ©1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress and music © 1993 Augsburg Fortress

“*O Lord, Now Let Your Servant*” TEXT: Ernest E. Ryden, 1886-1981, alt., based on the Nunc dimittis Music: Finnish folk tune; arr. hymnal version TEXT© 1925 Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress

“*Go, My Children, with My Blessing*” TEXT: Jaroslav J. Vajda, b. 1919, alt. Music: Welsh traditional; arr. Ralph Vaugh Williams, 1872-1958; TEXT © 1983 Concordia Publishing House; Arr. © Oxford University Press

---

**The Prophetic, Discipleship, and Gospel readings:** Printed from *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

**The Psalm reading:** New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

---

Remember to stop by the Information Table and sign the greeting cards.

**North Baltimore Food Pantry October** requested donations include: peanut butter, jams, jellies, and preserves. Thank you for your continued support.

Due to changes taking place at the local recycling center, recycling here at the church has been halted until further notice. Thank you

## St. John's Lutheran Church Invites You

*Beverages provided*



*Table service provided*

to their Annual Church Potluck/Picnic –  
Sunday, September 24 at 1:00  
at the home of Dave Sharninghouse,  
5421 Twp. Rd. 136, Findlay.

Please bring your favorite potluck dish (with serving utensil) to share.



Come join in some end of summer fun!

---

Don't be jealous with what God has given to another person.  
Be happy with what God has given you – stop comparing yourself to  
others.

The kingdom of heaven is not about fairness but about God's grace.



Have you made your reservation yet? Please do so soon!

**WELCA Fall Gathering  
of the Central Conference**  
**Rest and Renewal**



Saturday, October 7, 2023  
St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
215 N Second St  
North Baltimore, OH 45872-1105

Lunch cost: \$7.00  
St. John's Lutheran Church of McComb  
will be co-hosting.

Registration with coffee begins at 9:00 a.m. Closing prayer and safe travels home at 1:00 p.m.

**SHERRI KRIEGER**, NWOS Director of Leadership Development for Congregational Care, will be our guest speaker.

Please call St. Luke's Church by Friday, September 29, to register  
419-257-3253 weekdays between 9 – 1  
(after hours please leave a message)

We hope you will join us!



Northwest Ohio Women of the ELCA  
Invite you to the 2023 Gathering  
Friday, October 27-Saturday, October 28  
@ the Findlay Inn and Conference Center

# **Here I am Lord**

Featured speaker for Friday is  
Dr. Lisa Chavers  
“Hearing God’s Rhythm and Answering the Call”

Featured speaker for Saturday is  
Nancy Heimke with the  
Ohio Grain Train

We will be collecting new underwear for men, women, and children in all sizes for the Orphan Grain Train in Napoleon, Ohio

There will be a Silent Auction of gift baskets and other items that are donated. If you wish to donate an item or basket, just bring it with you to the Gathering. Proceeds will help to send our delegates to the 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Convention

Registrations due by September 25.  
Contact Elaine Conley 419-625-0373 for more details.





Please help to keep our Prayer List up-to-date by notifying the church office of any changes, additions or deletions.

**WE GIVE THANKS:** for God's gifts and guidance for those who faithfully serve on our Church Council. Thanks be to God!

**MEMBERS:** Kolton Williams, Ron Bean, Mike Wheeler, Cheryl & John Kruse, Fred Husing, Shirley Heilman, Larry Slaughterbeck, Bob Kelley, Caroline Lieser, Marilyn Ziegler, Bertha & Jim Carter, Barb Williams.

**FAMILY AND FRIENDS:** Isabella, Mary Ann Webb, Keven Bickle, Shirley Hollowell, Cheryl, A.J., Mavery Breece, Caroline, Ethan, Brent Bradley, Richard Roberts, Deanna Griffith, Laura, Michael Sullivan, Cindy.

**MILITARY:** for all those who are in training and who are serving in the military & their families; the chaplains (*especially those in combat zones*); grieving families and friends of those who died while serving.

**COMPANION CHURCH:** Mwanawotta Lutheran Church, of the Dodoma Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

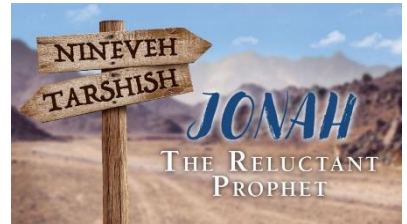
**WIDER CHURCH PRAYERS:** all ministries of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), our presiding **Bishop Elizabeth Eaton**, all our bishops, pastors, and leaders of the congregations of the NWOS (Northwestern Ohio Synod), **Bishop Daniel Beaudoin**, and our 15 Central Conference congregations.

**THE WORLD:** for peace in our country and around the world. For the end of violence against one another. For world leaders to seek guidance from you.



## Discomfort: Sign of Grace?

Poor Jonah. The guy never could get comfortable. He was uncomfortable with his God-given call to preach to Nineveh; he was uncomfortable in the arms of the sailors as they hoisted him over the boat's edge and tossed him into the sea; he was uncomfortable as the ocean's raging waves flung him about like flotsam; he was—undoubtedly—uncomfortable in the fish's belly; and he was uncomfortable and downright angry with God's mercy on the people of Nineveh. Jonah had a hard time getting comfortable with himself, and, even more so, Jonah was uneasy embracing the wideness of God's grace.



The same can be said about the laborers in Jesus' parable here in Matthew 20. The laborers who came in the early morning hours grumbled against the landowner because they were paid the same as others who started later and worked fewer hours. These laborers are ill-at-ease with the landowner's choice "to give to this last the same as I give to you." Like Jonah, they are uncomfortable with the unchecked mercy offered by the landowner/God. God doesn't play by our rules, and that can be very discomfoting for us all.

Our discomfort with grace manifests itself in all sorts of ways. It can be discomfoting for us to engage the poor and the outcast of our society. It can be discomfoting for us to welcome immigrants into our communities. It can be discomfoting to address the pervasive racism that still surrounds us. And it can be very discomfoting for us to open our lives to the transforming power of the cross of Christ, whereby "the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16).

Could it be that the more uncomfortable we become with the reckless love of God, the closer we are to understanding the meaning of grace?

215 North Second Street, North Baltimore, Ohio 45872-1105  
419-257-3253 [StLukesNB@gmail.com](mailto:StLukesNB@gmail.com)  
Church Office Hours M-F 9-1