

## Order of Worship for September 13, 2020

### 15th Sunday after Pentecost

*Twenty-seventh Sunday of COVID-19 Pandemic*

#### WELCOME

Rev. Nancy Mikoski

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Whether you are a newcomer to us or have been with Pennington Presbyterian for decades, you are welcome! We are glad you are worshipping today.

The Fall Start-Up began this morning! For the time being, worship and education and youth groups will continue virtually. We are working toward having a limited number of us worship in the sanctuary and others worship with the service live streamed. We will keep you informed about when we can begin to have in person worship and other events.

Snapshot of Sundays beginning today:

- ❑ Adult Ed Bible and Theology class meets from 9-10am Their first unit is on the book of Psalms.
- ❑ Children's Church School with "Music with Mr. Phil" and a Godly Play lesson for children age 3 through grade 4 will be on Zoom from 9:15-9:45am. Parents are invited to participate with their kids.
- ❑ Grades 5-8 and Grades 9-12 will each have a Zoom class at 11:30am with a focus this fall on Bible stories about hope.
- ❑ Sunday Night Central youth group for grades 5-8 will be from 6:30-7:30pm using Zoom.

The high school youth group will meet on Tuesdays at 7:00 pm for games and great conversations.

It's important that we have new registration and permission forms for every child and teen in our programs. Parents, please help us out by filling them out for us. Thanks!

Thanks to all who participated in "Chalk the Walk" adding bright images and positive messages for students and teachers as this school year began this week.

Save the date: Casey's ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament will be next Sunday, September 20, at 3:00pm EST, via Zoom.

We are so blessed this year to have two seminarians with us this year. Christine James is returning for a second year; Matt Heisler is new to us. Here they are introducing themselves to us:

*(videos of Christine and Matt)*

Our liturgists today are Casey Aldridge, Christine James, Allison Neary, and the Wiley Family. Matt Wiley will now lead our Call to Worship.

## CALL TO WORSHIP

Matt Wiley

Give praise to God! Praise the Lord, for it is God who saves.  
It is God who forgives.  
It is God who delivers.  
Give thanks and praise to the Lord!

Our first hymn is "*In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful*" which is hymn #654 in the Glory to God hymnal.

## HYMN

*In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful*

Glory to God #654

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION and WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Allison Neary

As loving parents have compassion for their children, God has compassion for us. Confident in God's love, let us confess our sins, first as one body, and then individually in silence. Let us pray.

God our redeemer, we confess that we remain captivated by sin. You move heaven and earth to save us, but we are unmoved by the suffering of others. You are willing to forgive again and again, but we are unwilling to forgive others. Forgive us, Lord. Free us so that we are no longer bound by sin, but released, restored, and set free to worship and serve you in freedom and love.

And hear us now as we confess to you in silence.

*Silent confession for 20-30 seconds*

Amen.

People of God, through Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven! God is merciful and gracious and is Lord of us all. As reconciled children of God, full of gratitude, let us live in love.

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Allison Neary

As we prepare to hear God's word read and proclaimed, let us pray, seeking illumination. Let us pray.

God of grace, strengthen us and guide us with your Word through the power of your Holy Spirit; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## FIRST SCRIPTURE READING

Allison Neary

Numbers 6:22-26

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **23** Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, **24** The Lord bless you and keep you; **25** the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; **26** the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Nancy Mikoski and Wiley family

Hey kids! Grab your backpacks! We are ready for Time with Children!

Good morning everyone! Many of you started a new school year this week. I know it was a bit strange. Sometimes you went to school and were in your new classrooms with your teachers and friends, but the school was a little different this year. Some of you went to school right in your own home, on a laptop. And some of you did both at school and at home learning. Wow! I'm so impressed with all of you and how you are doing a great job at being flexible and learning to learn in new ways and in lots of different places.

Whether you are at school or learning at home, most of you probably have a backpack. I imagine you have in there some pencils and pens, maybe some markers or crayons, some notebooks, and paper. Maybe you have a ruler or a calculator. Anyone have headphones? Or a snack? Or hand sanitizer? Or a mask?

This morning I am going to offer a prayer, a prayer asking God to "bless our backpacks." So if you have your backpack close by, pick it up and hold it. Or wear it. Maybe your parents or your grandparents want to put their hand on the backpack with you. And I hope, as I pray, this time, you will keep your eyes open. Some of us sent in pictures of our backpacks or of us with our backpacks. As I pray, look at the faces of your friends, and their backpacks. Look for your own picture, and let's ask God to bless all of us and all of our backpacks. Okay? Ready? Touch your backpack.

Let us pray:

*photos with blessing words over the pictures*

Dear God, we thank you for this new school year and for all the things we will learn. Thank you for these backpacks and the books and school supplies that will help us learn. We thank you for our new teachers and ask you to bless them. We thank you for our fellow students and ask you to help us to be good friends with them, to be kind and caring. We pray for our brothers, sisters, and siblings who might be doing school work close by us at home. Help them to learn, too, and have a great school year. So bless our backpacks, Lord, and bless all of us. Remind us everyday that you love us and are as close to us as our backpacks are when we put them on. We love you, Lord, and thank you for being with us in school, and blessing us and our backpacks today. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" **22** Jesus 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. **24** When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; **25** and, 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. **26** So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' **27** And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. **28** But 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.' **29** Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' **30** But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. **31** When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. **32** Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33** Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' **34** And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. **35** So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **SERMON**

Rev. Nancy Mikoski

## **MOMENT OF THANKS**

Rev. Karen Hernandez-Granzen

During this pandemic, we have become increasingly aware of how the coronavirus was taking a disproportionate toll on the black and Latinx communities in our country. The reasons are complex but they include higher numbers of people from those communities are employed in jobs that made them the "essential workers" such as in health care, grocery stores, as bus drivers, and in transportation. They also, on average, have less access to health care, and some live in apartments or homes with more people which makes isolating someone with covid symptoms very difficult. During the month of August, we collected face masks, a necessary tool these days to help keep people safe. Rev. Karen Hernandez Granzen and the great people at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Trenton distributed the masks for us. Here is a message from them for us.

*(video from Westminster Presbyterian Church)*

## **OFFERING**

Dr. Christine James

Just as we forgive others because God has forgiven us, so we give because of all that God has given us. We pray that all of our offerings will be used for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

While we are not worshipping at the church, there are two simple ways to give our financial offerings. First you can mail a check to the church. Or you may go to our website and use the Donate Now button. It is simple, safe, and fast. While we aren't together in our church building, we continue to be the church and have important ministry to support. Thank you for continuing to give. May God bless and use these gifts.

## **JOYS AND CONCERNS**

Casey Aldridge

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE and THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Let us pray. God of generosity, God of grace, God of forgiveness, your love is inexhaustible. Your goodness and your faithfulness to your people knows absolutely no depths. We worship you, Lord Jesus, and we give thanks for all of the light and joy you add to our lives. Ours is the privilege to share as Christians the good news of your incarnation and your resurrection with the world, signs of hope for us and symbols of your solidarity with humankind. Every Sunday it is a joy to celebrate your story, God, and to rejoice in the certainty that your Holy Spirit remains among us, holding us together as one body, adding light and love and joy to our lives.

In that spirit, we bring before you in prayer our delights, O God. Just as you shared your Son with us, we know that you rejoice in the joys of our world, and moreover we know that every good thing comes from you. We therefore give thanks to your generosity and grace for all that we enjoy, in our individual and collective lives.

We give thanks for a new season marked by a new school year, and the structure, knowledge, and curiosity it brings with it. We ask that you watch over and protect students, teachers, parents, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, school counselors, janitors, and everyone involved in our education system during this pandemic, whether instruction is taking place online or in-person or both.

We give thanks as well for what the changing season means for our church community: a new year of Christian education, Church school, and youth ministry. We invite your presence to be with us all this year—youth and children and adults alike—that we might see and experience and dive deeper into the resurrection hope that is built upon the firm foundation of the life, death, and raising of Jesus Christ. We ask that your wisdom and your Spirit of understanding grace us as we learn new things about you and your vision for the world, God.

To that end, we express our joy and give thanks as well for our returning seminarian, Christine James, and our new seminarian, Matt Heisler. We thank you, Lord, for calling them into this congregation and for the perspectives, insights, and compassion that they will bring into our community. Be with them this year as they navigate a field education experience that looks different than what they might have expected or hoped for a year ago, and fill us all with grace and love to receive their contribution for what it is: a gift from you, our Creator in heaven.

Almighty Lord, nothing in this world shines as brightly as your holy face, no gift is as pure as that which comes from you, and nothing in this world rivals the peace that you alone provide. But that truth reminds us that the world we live in is not as peaceful as you would have it be. Our joys are not everything. We confess, Lord, that you are our savior, which means that you must save us from something. And we call you our comforter, which means there must be grief and lament that you attend to. And so, in addition to giving thanks, we express our concerns to you as well.

We pray for Robin Hepburn, back home after surgery on her spine on Tuesday. We pray for a complete recovery for Robin. Not only do we ask for your healing touch to grace her life right now, O God, but we also ask that you make your presence known to her as she endures the road to recovery ahead of her with patience, strength, and hope.

We pray for Elsa Koczan, too, who is at home recovering from eye surgery earlier this week, after it had been postponed and rescheduled. Be with Elsa, God, and give her the peace of mind and strength she needs during this season of healing.

And we pray for similar healing, peace, and strength for Galen Meyer's sister, Kris, who had open-heart surgery on Tuesday. We give thanks that Kris's surgery was successful and we give thanks to the courage of surgeons and advances in medical technology, and yet in serious operations such as these we know that healing is a process. Be with Kris, Elsa, and Robin in each of their healing processes, and surround them in your love.

Our hearts go out to all of the families and individuals recovering from surgeries or healing from illnesses, not only within our community but around the world. And we grieve for all whose operations are unsuccessful, our hearts shatter for all who lose loved ones suddenly in sudden accidents or in long-drawn out seasons of deteriorating health. Be with not only those who are sick and in need of healing, but embrace in your loving presence all those whose loved ones are taken too early.

This week in particular we remember the lives lost and the families torn apart by the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon nineteen years ago on September 11, 2001. That day reminds us, God, that healing is not a linear process where grief and lament are resolved with time. No; for this state and for our neighbors in New York, the trauma and horror of that day do not subside with time. We pray for all those who were killed, injured, or who lost loved ones on that day, and we lament all of the ways our society has looked less trusting, less kind-hearted, less open, and less neighborly ever since. Comfort the people for whom this weekend is still particularly hard, and remind us that your Spirit still moves, that love for all people and peace between religions and cultures is your will for the world.

We lift up prayers of concern as well for Jane Simpson and Carl Christiansen's son Will, and his wife Sierra, who live in Oregon a county over from raging wildfires. We pray for all who have lost loved ones and entire homes to the fires devastating the Western half of the United States. Equip the church to care for those who will come out of this crisis as climate refugees, and teach us to be better stewards of our forests and natural resources. Like modern medicine, like our seminarians, like the heroism of first responders in moments of tragedy, and like resurrection hope, our forests are a gift from you, Lord. We give thanks for every gift, and we ask that you give us the wisdom to honor and receive these gifts for the purpose of your kingdom.

We pray these things in your name, and with the words Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Our final hymn is "*Shine, Jesus, Shine*" which is Glory to God #192.

**HYMN**

*Shine, Jesus, Shine*

Glory to God #192

**BENEDICTION**

Nancy Mikoski

Go out as God's beloved people, to love, and as forgiven people to forgive.

And may the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord's face shine upon you, and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen!

**POSTLUDE**

*Suite No. 5 in E Major: IV. Air and Variations*  
*"The Harmonious Blacksmith"*

G.F. Händel

Don Dolan, *piano*