



Sunday, September 6, 2020

14th Sunday after Pentecost

Holy Communion

*Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.*

**WELCOME!** We are glad to have you join us in worship today. Here are a few notes to help you feel more at home participating in our worship.

**Worshiping.** Today's service is printed in this bulletin. Parts in bold indicate responses by everyone in which you are invited to participate.

**Adjustments to our service.** In order to comply with safety and social distancing guidelines, it will be mandatory that everyone have a face covering and everyone must be mindful of keeping their distance from others. Please refrain from mingling in confined spaces before and/or after service.

Other adjustments are:

- Congregational singing is discouraged. If you feel you must, please sing softly with your mask in place.
- The sign of the PEACE will be offered by a wave or bow while staying in place.
- The OFFERING PLATE will not be passed or brought forward. It will be in the back of the sanctuary instead.
- If this is a service of HOLY COMMUNION, communion elements will be available as you exit the sanctuary.
- At the conclusion of the service, everyone is asked to remain in their pew. Ushers will dismiss people by row to maintain safe spacing.
- The Sanctuary, Narthex and Broadway lobby are the only areas open. All other areas of St. Stephen's are closed.

**Prayer Requests.** Please call the office you'd like to place someone on our prayer list.

**PRELUDE:** When In Our Music God is Glorified

**+ GATHERING +**

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

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*The assembly stands. All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

P In the name of the Father,  
and of the + Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

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

**C Amen.**

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P Gracious God,

**C have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.**

**Amen.**

P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG: *All Are Welcome* (ELW 641)**

*All are invited to listen.*

*Let us build a house where love can dwell  
and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
rock of faith and vault of grace;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:*

**Refrain**

*All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.*

**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.**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**P** O God, you are righteous

**C** **Transform us by your Word!**

**P** Your judgments are upright

**C** **Transform us by your Word!**

**P** Your precepts are unforgettable

**C** **Transform us by your Word!**

**P** Give us understanding and we will live

**C** **Re-form us, reconcile us,  
Transform us by your Word!**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P** Let us pray. O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C** **Amen.**

+ **WORD** +

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

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11**

*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

A reading from Ezekiel.

<sup>7</sup>So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, “O wicked ones, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: “Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?”

<sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14**

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

A reading from Romans.

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

...The word of the Lord. **C Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

P The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**C Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

...The gospel of the Lord. **C Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

**HYMN OF THE DAY: *Earth and All Stars!* (ELW 731)**

*All are invited to stand and listen as the Word of God is proclaimed in song.*

*Earth and all stars! Loud rushing planets!  
Sing to the Lord a new song!  
Hail, wind, and rain! Loud blowing snowstorm!  
Sing to the Lord a new song!*

Refrain

*God has done marvelous things.  
I too sing praises with a new song!*

**APOSTLES' CREED**

A With the whole Church, we confess our faith.

**C 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**

A Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

A Unite your church, O God. Grant us the gifts of repentance and reconciliation. Bless the cooperative work of churches in this community. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships; guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches.

Lord, in your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

A Protect your creation, O God. Teach us ways that do not harm what you have entrusted to our care. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution.

Lord, in your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

A Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbors. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward laws that protect the well-being of all.

Lord, in your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

A Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbors to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit. Lord, in your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

A Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbors in and through our work. Lord, in your mercy,  
**C hear our prayer.**

A All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.  
**C Amen.**

## **PEACE**

*The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.*

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C And also with you.**

*The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace with a wave or bow while staying in place.*

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE: *I Will Sing a Song of Love***

**+ MEAL +**

***God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.***

## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

P 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 your Holy Spirit,  
that by this Holy Communion we may know  
the unity we share with all your people  
in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

**C Amen**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

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

*Communion will be distributed at the conclusion of our worship service as you exit the sanctuary. After the presiding minister hands you the wafer, take one individual cup of wine or juice, partake of communion and dispose of the used cup.*

**+ SENDING +**

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

### **BLESSING**

P The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.  
**C Amen.**



**SENDING SONG: *Go, My Children, with My Blessing* (WOV 721)**

*All are invited to listen.*

*Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone.  
Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own.  
In my love's baptismal river  
I have made you mine forever.  
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.*

**DISMISSAL**

**A** Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**C** **Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE:** Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

**ST. STEPHEN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**

270 South Broadway + Hicksville NY 11801

Church Office: Monday - Tuesday 9 am - 2 pm Wednesday - Thursday 9 am - 3 pm, Friday Noon - 3 pm

Church Office: 516/931-0710

Robert Maurer, President of the Congregation ~ Tracey Rosen, Music Director

Fern Funk, Parish Administrator (*email [ststephenoffice@msn.com](mailto:ststephenoffice@msn.com)*)

Church Website [www.ststephenshicksville.com](http://www.ststephenshicksville.com)

Join us on Facebook: St. Stephens Lutheran Church, Hicksville, NY

Gail Agarenzo, Nursery School Director School Office: 516/931-0267

(*email [ststephennurseryschool@msn.com](mailto:ststephennurseryschool@msn.com)*) Nursery School Website [www.ststephennurseryschool.com](http://www.ststephennurseryschool.com)

## Restoring Right Relationships

In today's gospel reading, Jesus turns his attention to the community of believers. Matthew is the only gospel in which Jesus explicitly speaks about the church and therefore addresses some concerns of communal living. This week, Matthew provides a framework for responding to sin and conflict for the sake of restoration within a community. It is inevitable that in a relationship, a time comes when someone lets you down. They may disappoint you, fail to meet your expectations, hurt your feelings, disagree with you, misspeak, or break your trust. This happens in all relationships and in all places—the church is no exception. Although these actions can be unintentional, occasionally relationships are scarred by purposeful acts of betrayal, abuse, deception, and malice. In all cases, Jesus' way acknowledges the reality of broken people and relationships, and recommends a path forward.

It is common to seek revenge or try to get even with those who have hurt us. We expect them to be punished for the wrong they have done. What Jesus proposes here is a system not of retributive justice but of restorative justice. Instead of demanding vengeance, we can engage the other person in order to heal and repair the relationship and community. We are to try multiple times, involving the community as needed, to make amends. We are not to give up on the ones who do harm, but to offer opportunities for dialogue and healing.

Jesus does not abandon sinners or the church filled with conflicted believers. He comes among them as they listen to each other and works to restore their relationships. We practice the work of restoration every week by sharing a sign of peace with one another. In each exchange of peace, Jesus comes among us to offer grace and forgiveness.