

Sunday, September 10, 2023
15th Sunday after Pentecost



48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ www.blcfairport.org
The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

Sunday, September 10, 2023 ~ 15th Sunday after Pentecost

PRELUDE

Moderato

Ludwig van Beethoven

from Sonatina in G Major, Anh. 5 no. 1

Madeleine Hoffman, piano

In Thee Is Gladness

IN DIR IST FREUDE / Giovanni G. Gastoldi
setting, David Cherwien

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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. 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.

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be God, the one who forms us, † Jesus who bears the cross, the Spirit who makes our joy complete.

Amen.

Let us bow before God in humility, confessing our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Steadfast and faithful God,
you have revealed the ways of justice, yet we fail to follow you. We are
overwhelmed by the world's violence and suffering. We are afraid to risk
what we have for the sake of others. For the harm we have caused, known
and unknown, forgive us. For the unjust demands we place on others and
your creation, forgive us. For the ways we turn away from you and our
neighbor, forgive us. Lead us back to you and set us on the right path; in the
name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Beloved in Christ, God's justice stretches beyond all understanding. God's
compassion is beyond compare. In Jesus, God is always making a new way for us.
In † Christ, you are already and always forgiven.
Amen.

GATHERING HYMN	God Is Here!	ELW 526
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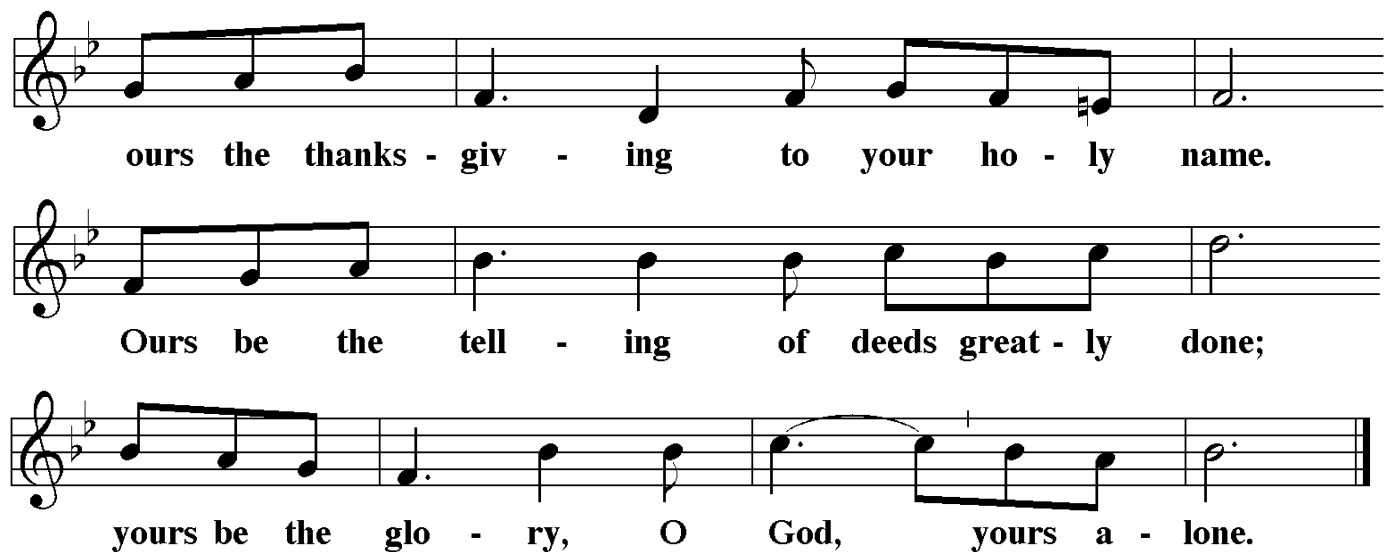
GREETING

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.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;
yours the a - noint - ing, the ra - di - ant worth.
Ours the re - joic - ing for spir - its a - flame;



ours the thanks - giv - ing to your ho - ly name.

Ours be the tell - ing of deeds great - ly done;

yours be the glo - ry, O God, yours a - lone.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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.

Amen.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS

All kids ages 3 through elementary are welcome to a special time of hearing the Word, conversation and activity! Parents can remain in the sanctuary while the kids gather in the room across the hall from the side entrance to the sanctuary. Kids will return during the offering so they can participate in Communion.

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.

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The 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.” ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides 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; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

Al - le - lu - ia. You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵“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. ¹⁶But 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. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, 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. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

I Come with Joy

ELW 482

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Our prayers are always offered on behalf of the whole community.

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

A brief silence.

#1 Hold us accountable, O God. Show your church where repentance is needed and lead us in paths of intentional compassion and listening. Help us extend hands of reconciliation and care, especially in relationships with other Christians and people of other faiths. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#2 Reveal your miracles to us, O God. Move us to cherish you as we behold the wonders of creation. Renew the seas and the soil, the forests and the creatures that live in them. Turn us to ways of living that seek Earth’s thriving. Continue to be with those impacted by natural disasters. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

#3 As we start this new school year, we pray for all students, teachers, school staff and administrators. Through all the ups and downs this year will bring, may they know your unfailing love and their connection to those of us here at Bethlehem. As we all go out into the world, let us feel connected to you — the One in whom we live and move and have our being, the One who created all things, the One who loves us completely. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

By the power of your Spirit, you build us into your beloved community. Strengthen the connections we share with these members and friends of Bethlehem and their families: Chester, Bailey & Mike (Connor, Merrin, Finnegan), Russ & Susan, Glenda & Mark, and Judy. Strengthen the ministries we share with others, especially our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Extend your arms of mercy to those struggling in body, mind, or spirit.

We pray for those who are grieving, especially the family and friends of:

- Pam, daughter of Jim S, who died on 8/31
- Brian W, friend of Carolyn F and Steve F, who died on 8/26
- Chuck G, friend of Phyllis and Bob S, who died on 8/24
- Eleanor L, aunt of Pr. Amy, who died on 8/24
- Deloris, grandmother of Liana C, who died on 8/22
- Connie H who died on 8/23

We pray for those in need of healing, especially:

- Lisa Q who has begun hospice care
- Karen B as she began treatment for a recent diagnosis of stage 4 lung cancer

Hear these prayers we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

Silence for individual prayer

Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Remember us according to your steadfast love as we offer these and the prayers of our heart, trusting in your compassion made known through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SHARING GOD'S MEAL

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor.

If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.

OFFERING

Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry.

OFFERING OF MUSIC

With a Voice of Singing

Martin Shaw

The Chancel Choir

OFFERTORY



☒ 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 dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we



of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,
Lord, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. God of power, God of plenty,

all things belong to you. We bring your gifts to the table, that all might be fed.

Form us into the body of your Beloved, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Lord Jesus, you are resurrection and life.

We give thanks that at your table you fill us with good things and feed us from your abundance.

Pour out your Spirit on us and this feast of love.

Build us into a lasting community that embodies your love. Strengthen us to serve you in all we do. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

One in body, one in Spirit, we pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who
sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Jesus invites you to this table. Come, eat and live.

Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant. If you worship through the Livestream and wish to receive communion, please reach out to one of the pastors.

THE COMMUNION



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.

COMMUNION HYMNS

Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether

ELW 470

The Peace of the Lord

ELW 646

TABLE BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE

☞ Thank - ful hearts and voic - es raise; tell ev - 'ry -
 one what God has done. Let all who seek the
 Lord re - joice and bear Christ's ho - ly name.
 Send us with your prom - is - es, O God, and
 lead us forth in joy with shouts of thanks -
 giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia.

BLESSING FOR THE START OF A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Together we are the body of Christ,

and we belong to each other.

We can share our joy, laughter, and hope,

we can share our fears, overwhelm, and sadness.

When we share what is good,

it is multiplied.

When we share what is hard,

the load is divided.

In our schools and communities,

help us learn and grow.

In our classes and groups,

help us show support and build each other up.

In our homes and families,

help us embody care and spark love.

Together we are the body of Christ!

LEAVING TO SERVE

BENEDICTION

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds
in † Christ Jesus.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN	Christ, Be Our Light	ELW 715
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assisted by BLC Percussion Ensemble

Stanzas 1, 2: All

3: Women

4: Men

5: All

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. God is at work in you.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Concluding Voluntary

R. G. Thompson

BLC Musicians

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Dr. Jim Jefferis, Director of The Chancel Choir

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

Thank you to all those who participated in worship this Sunday! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with Mark Finke or one of the pastors following worship or contact Mark directly at volunteersupport@blcfairport.org.

Communicate with us: Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

What's happening at BLC this week? Visit the Calendar of Events at www.blcfairport.org. Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at office@blcfairport.org or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

Church office hours: Our co-Pastors are available Sunday-Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org or pastor.amy@blcfairport.org.

Blessing of Backpacks by the Rev. Jo Nygard Owens, adapted in part with the Rev. Katie Barrett Todd

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Called to Community

Jesus says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20). In these Sundays after Pentecost, we are repeatedly reminded that God has not abandoned us and that Christ's resurrection and ascension are a beginning for us, not an end. The readings this week focus on the practical work of the gathered Christian community: turning from sin to repentance, from conflict to reconciliation. The question is as relevant today as it was for the disciples and the first Christians: how do we live together, work together, as the body of Christ? We have been saved by grace, liberated by God's love to love one another. What does it mean for us and for our community to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14) and to clothe ourselves in love?

We keep asking these questions because the way we gather as Christians continues to be profoundly countercultural. We do not gather as a social club, drawn and kept together only by shared demographics and interests. If church is only a social club, there is no reason to continue to gather if conflict arises, if uncomfortable issues are raised, or if "the way it's always been" begins to change. If church is only a social club, there is no reason to do the hard work of reconciliation and forgiveness.

God calls us into community knowing that being in community is hard. In scripture we can find practical guidance for gathering through good and hard times. The Holy Spirit is always at work—in, through, and among us—to gather and regather us again. In community we meet and become Christ's body in ways that are impossible for us as individuals; all the commandments are fulfilled in this call to neighbor-love (Rom. 13:9).