

Reformation Lutheran Church

3670 Perkiomen Avenue

Reading, PA 19606

www.reformationlutheran.org

Office (610) 779-0534

Pastor Stoddard (610) 334-1285

19th Sunday after Pentecost
A Service of Word and Sacrament

October 4th, 2026
9:30 AM



In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

Welcome to Reformation!

Presiding Minister:	The Rev. Dr. Greg Stoddard
Director of Music:	Dr. Heidi Rochlin
Ushers	Rich Hawk and Pam Schneeberger
Reader	Maryann Gardner
Assisting Minister	Carole Miller
Acolyte	Taylor Bergey
Altar Guild	Cindy & Dave Shirey and Kathy & Charles Miller
Flowers	Cindy & Dave Shirey-in honor of Brad & Megan Shirey's wedding anniversary
Live streaming	Tom Sahaida, Stu Johnston, Jared Preston, Andy Dobroskey

WELCOME

PRELUDE

The assembly stands.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

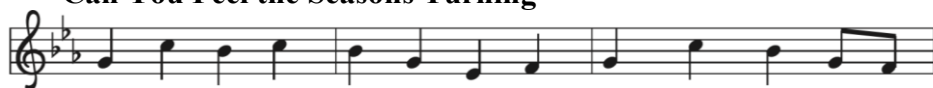
Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth. **Amen.**

Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.

Compassionate God,
we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness in the world and in our own hearts. Creation groans from overuse. Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships. Indifference keeps us from seeking justice. Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others. Turn our hearts back to you. Restore our world and reconcile us to one another. Renew us to live as your holy people, following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hear this good news: We have peace with God through ☩ Jesus Christ, in whom there is no condemnation, but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. Receive freely this healing gift of grace. **Amen.**

Can You Feel the Seasons Turning



1 Can you feel the sea - sons turn - ing, winds and waves grown
 2 Can you hear the crea-tures cry - ing— lynx and ot - ter,
 3 Can you feel the sea - sons turn - ing? Storm clouds gath - er



wild and strange? Can you feel cre - a - tion groan - ing,
 wolf and whale? Can you hear the Spir - it sigh - ing
 in the skies. All a - round us signs of warn - ing



fear-ful of the com - ing change: ice - caps melt - ing,
 as her chil - dren grieve and fail? Na - ture's poor, the
 bid us o - pen fright - ened eyes. Called by God to



o - ceans ris - ing, homes and hab - i - ta - tions lost?
 first to suf - fer, pay the price of hu - man greed.
 serve as stew - ards till earth's gar - den greens and thrives,

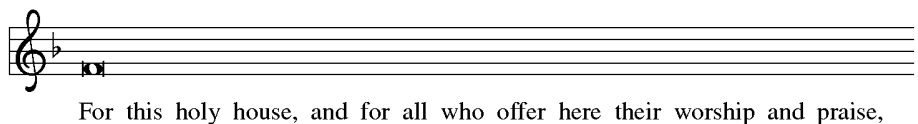
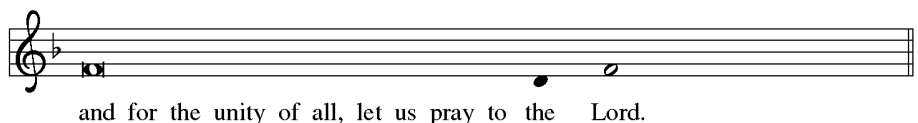
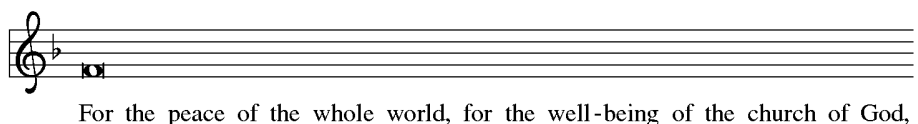
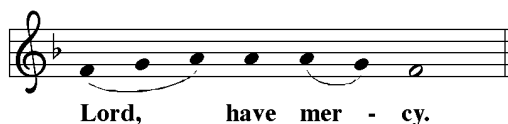
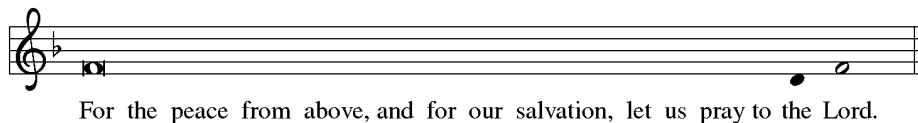


Can you feel the sea - sons turn-ing? Can you count the bit - ter cost?
 Can you hear the crea-tures cry-ing, beg-ging us to stop and heed?
 can we learn in time to lis-ten? Can we turn and change our lives?

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.

KYRIE:



GLORY TO GOD

Assisting minister



Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's 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 a-way 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

Let us pray,

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The assembly may be seated.

FIRST READING – ISAIAH 5:1-7

¹ I will sing for my beloved
my love song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

² He dug it and cleared it of stones
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded rotten grapes.

³ And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.

⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield rotten grapes?

⁵ And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

⁶ I will make it a wasteland;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;

I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,

and the people of Judah
are his cherished garden;
he expected justice
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness
but heard a cry!

SECOND READING – PHILIPPIANS 3:4B-14

[Paul writes:] ^{4b} If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have laid hold of it, but one thing I have laid hold of: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal, toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The assembly stands.



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



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

GOSPEL – MATTHEW 21:33-46

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ³³ “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. ³⁴ When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Then he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ ³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” ⁴¹ They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord’s doing,

and it is amazing in our eyes’?

⁴³ “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly may be seated.

SERMON

The assembly stands.

There in God's Garden



1 There in God's gar - den stands the Tree of Wis - dom,
 2 Its name is Je - sus, name that says, "Our Sav - ior!"
 3 Thorns not its own are tan - gled in its fo - liage;
 4 See how its branch - es reach to us in wel - come;



whose leaves hold forth the heal - ing of the na - tions:
 There on its branch - es see the scars of suf - f'ring;
 our greed has starved it, our de - spite has choked it.
 hear what the Voice says, "Come to me, ye wea - ry!



Tree of all knowl - edge, Tree of all com -
 see there the ten - drils of our hu - man
 Yet, look! it lives! its grief has not de -
 Give me your sick - ness, give me all your



pas - sion, Tree of all beau - ty.
 self - hood feed on its life - blood.
 stroyed it nor fire con - sumed it.
 sor - row, I will give bless - ing."

5 This is my ending
 this my resurrection;
 into your hands, Lord,
 I commit my spirit.
 This have I searched for;
 now I can possess it.
 This ground is holy.

6 All heav'n is singing,
 "Thanks to Christ whose passion
 offers in mercy
 healing, strength, and pardon.
 Peoples and nations,
 take it, take it freely!"
 Amen! My Master!

APOSTLES' CREED

**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.

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 INTERCESSION

Assisting Minister: Seeking the Spirit of God who makes all things new, we pray for the church and the world..

Each petition of the prayers concludes with these words:

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Assisting Minister: Trusting in your boundless grace, O God, we lift up these spoken prayers and those in our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

The assembly may be seated.

OFFERING & ANTHEM

With a Heart of Faith, *by Tina English*

The assembly stands.

OFFERTORY: Let the Vineyard be Fruitful Lord

ELW 182



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 the dreams of all; u -



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



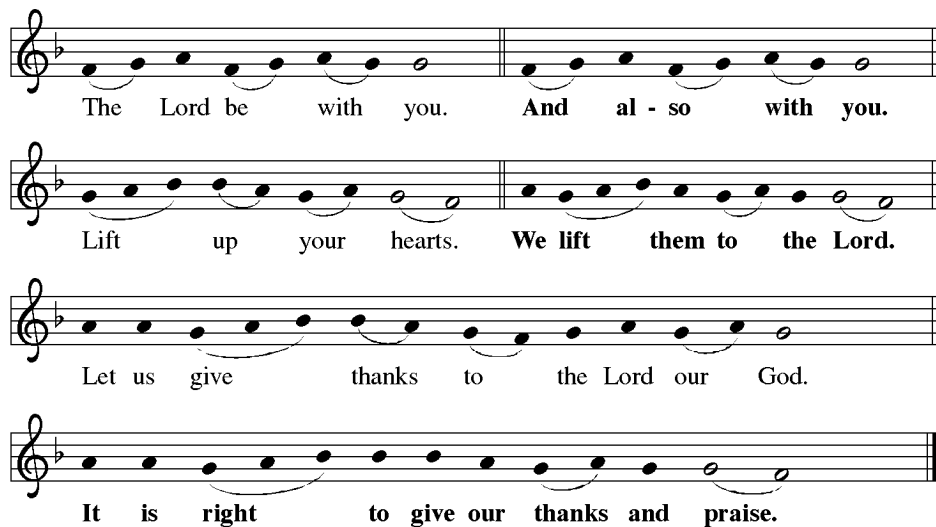
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray:

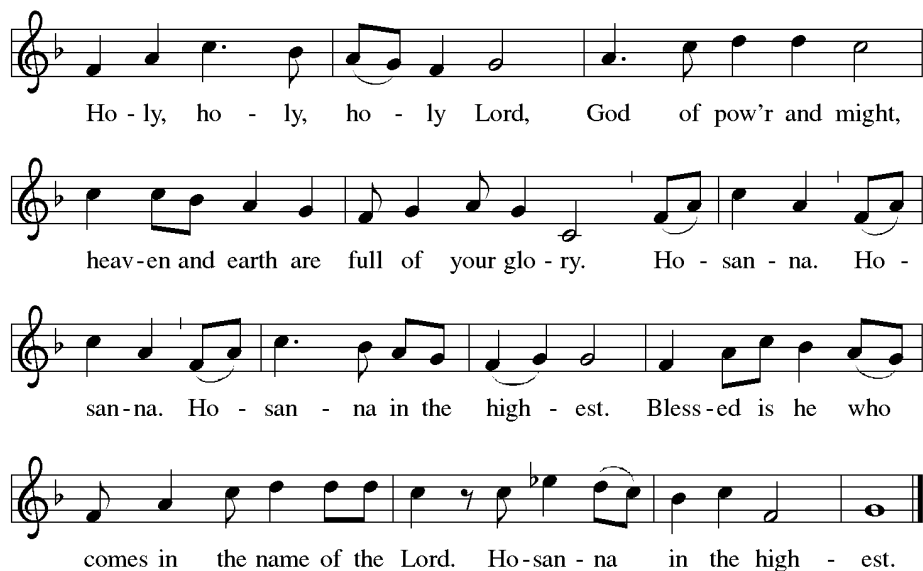
God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING



The Lord be with you. And al - so 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.

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, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.
And so, with all the choirs of angels,
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, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. 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.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

INVITATION & COMMUNION

Christ invites you to this table.
All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

Please note that, to be accessible to all, our communion bread is gluten-free, nut-free and lactose-free; both wine (served at the rail) and grape juice (in the trays) are available. When returning your used cups to the trays along the walls, please do not stack the cups. All are welcome to commune.

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.

COMMUNION HYMNS

Jesus Loves Me!

ELW 595

1 Je - sus loves me! this I know, for the Bi - ble tells me so;
2 Je - sus loves me! he who died heav - en's gates to o - pen wide;
3 Je - sus loves me! he will stay close be - side me all the way;

lit - tle ones to him be - long, they are weak, but he is strong.
he will wash a - way my sin, let his lit - tle child come in.
when at last I come to die, he will take me home on high.

Refrain

Yes, Je - sus loves me, yes, Je - sus loves me,
yes, Je - sus loves me, the Bi - ble tells me so.

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

ELW 484



- 1 As when the shep - herd calls his sheep, they know and heed his voice;
- 2 With joy - ful lips we sing to you our praise and grat - i - tude
- 3 Is not the cup we bless and share the blood of Christ out - poured?
- 4 The mys - t'ry of your pres - ence, Lord, no mor - tal tongue can tell:
- 5 You give your - self to us, O Lord; then self - less let us be,



so when you call your fam - ly, Lord, we fol - low and re - joice.
 that you should count us wor - thy, Lord, to share this heav'n - ly food.
 Do not one cup, one loaf, de - clare our one - ness in the Lord?
 whom all the world can - not con - tain comes in our hearts to dwell.
 to serve each oth - er in your name in truth and char - i - ty.

Thy Word **Check this matches contemporary**

C 37

Chorus:

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path
 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path

When I feel afraid and think I've lost my way
 Still you're there right beside me
 Nothing will I fear as long as you are near
 Please be near me to the end [Chorus]

I will not forget your love for me and yet
 My heart forever is wandering
 Jesus be my guide and hold me to your side
 And I will love you to the end [Chorus]

The assembly stands.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

BLESSING

The God of love
draw you into full accord and one mind,
in the body of Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The God of hope
grant you strength and joy in all circumstances
through the interceding of the Spirit.

Amen.

The God of grace
✠ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Thine the Amen



1 Thine the a - men thine the praise al - le - lu - ias an - gels raise
 2 Thine the life e - ter - nal - ly thine the prom - ise let there be
 3 Thine the tru - ly thine the yes thine the ta - ble we the guest
 4 Thine the king - dom thine the prize thine the won - der full sur - prise
 5 Thine the glo - ry in the night no more dy - ing on - ly light



thine the ev - er - last - ing head thine the break - ing of the bread
 thine the vi - sion thine the tree all the earth on bend - ed knee
 thine the mer - cy all from thee thine the glo - ry yet to be
 thine the ban - quet then the praise then the jus - tice of thy ways
 thine the riv - er thine the tree then the Lamb e - ter - nal - ly



thine the glo - ry thine the sto - ry thine the har - vest then the cup
 gone the nail - ing gone the rail - ing gone the plead - ing gone the cry
 then the ring - ing and the sing - ing then the end of all the war
 thine the glo - ry thine the sto - ry then the wel - come to the least
 then the ho - ly ho - ly ho - ly cel - e - bra - tion ju - bi - lee



thine the vine - yard then the cup is lift - ed up lift - ed up.
 gone the sigh - ing gone the dy - ing what was loss lift - ed high.
 thine the liv - ing thine the lov - ing ev - er - more ev - er - more.
 then the won - der all in - creas - ing at thy feast at thy feast.
 thine the splen - dor thine the bright - ness on - ly thee on - ly thee.

Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POSTLUDE

PRAYER LIST

Added – none

Reformation Family: Carol Baer, Steve Barnett, Ruth Blatt, Tom Brizek, Millie Castillo, Audrey DiGuardi, Bob Galbraith, Roger Hillibush, Dana Humbert, Maddie Kemp, Nancy Kern, Rod and Patti Kline, Cheryl Manella, Pat Schonour, Scott, Linda Sell,, Elinor Snyder, Jack Swartz, Erica Sweigert, and Herb Zettlemyer,

Friends of Reformation: Thomas Allmon, Linda Barnett, Sandy Bender, Andy Bishop, Claire Boarder, Karen Borsak, Michele Boucher, Mary Bowen, Susan Broome, Zena Burkert, Lucille Canta, Cathy, Barbara Connor, Carl and Laura, Patricia Derr. Bernadette Dieumegard, Wilgus Elliott, Judi and Carl Esterly, Ethan, Susan Flicker, Francis, Greg Geesaman, Robert Granko, Anthony Gross, Brian Gruber, Gino Hinnershitz John Howard, Deacon Kalbach, Kayden, Allison Kunkel, Batya Leidner, Scott Leone, Dana Little, Maryann and Elwood Long, Alyson, Sophie, and Avery Maas, Kathy McCoy,, Tom Mulvey, Andrew Nosti, Amy Papilla, Wyatt Plica, Chris Plue, Molly Regan, Avery Reinert, Keith and Peg Ruch, Garrett Schanfelder, Karolyn Schrufer, Kim Sharp, Linda Smith, Charles Sperling, Herm Spitzer, Jacob Stoner, Taylor Tenna, and Grace Vetter

We pray for our Call Committee as they listen and discern during this season of transition.

Next Week's Worship Leaders:

October 11th

Ushers	Pat and Kathy Austin
Reader	Jackie Morrissey
Assisting Minister	Jeanne Gochnauer
Acolyte	Paige Bergey

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Online Cookbook - Calling all cooks! During the last church picnic several of us thought that making a church cookbook for people to share popular recipes would be beneficial. If you have a recipe you would like to share you can submit a photocopy or written copy into the green folder on the table outside the sanctuary. Please include your name and contact information. This is in case there are any questions when I put it into the recipe website. If you have any questions please contact Katherine Kerchner at 484-930-0370 or Katherine.kerchner@gmail.com. Thank you for all your contributions!



Spaghetti Dinner Benefitting Reformation Youth Ministry

Tickets: \$15 adult or \$10 child (under 10)

Dinner includes: spaghetti and meatballs, salad, bread, dessert and drinks (BYOB). Take-out dinners available, but you must bring your own Tupperware containers.

Date: Saturday, October 24th 5 – 7 pm

Clothing Bank Updates:

New Hours & Volunteer Need (Friday, October 16th)

Starting in October, the Food Pantry is changing its hours, and the Clothing Bank will align with the new schedule. On Friday, October 16th, we need three volunteers for each of the following shifts:

- 10:00 AM – 12:15 PM
- 12:40 PM – 2:40 PM
- 2:40 PM – 4:40 PM

The work is straightforward. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at church or contact me at

karen.hawk5142@gmail.com

Monthly Sorting Volunteers (Tuesday, October 13th)

We also need volunteers to sort, fold, and organize clothing on the second Tuesday of each month at 9:30 AM at the Clothing Bank.

The next date is Tuesday, October 13th.

Fall Clothing Drive

For the fall season, we are collecting the following items:

- Children: Long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- Adults: Jeans, sweatpants, yoga pants, t-shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets, coats, and shoes

Kitten Yoga and Adoption Event - : Get ready for a morning of smiles, stretching, and furry friends! Reformation will host a Kitten Yoga and Kitten Adoption event at 11:00 am on *Wednesday, October 7, 2026.

Please note: * No yoga class at 10AM.

From the Property Committee - Our sexton, Tony Barrasso, has announced his resignation effective October 31st. We thank Tony for his dedicated service these past five years. A search is underway for this part-time (up to 10 hours) per week position which involves light maintenance and groundskeeping duties. Please speak with Pastor Greg, Tim Dewalt or Dale Miller if you are aware of a possible candidate.

Luther's Rose: The **Luther rose** or **Luther seal** is a widely recognized symbol for Lutheranism. It is the seal that was designed for Martin Luther at the behest of John Frederick of Saxony in 1530. Luther saw the design as a compendium or expression of his theology and faith, which he used to authorize his correspondence.

Theology of the Rose: In an 8 July 1530 letter, Luther interprets his seal: "Grace and peace from the Lord." As you desire to know whether my painted seal, which you sent to me, has hit the mark, I shall answer most amiably and tell you my original thoughts and reason about why my seal is a symbol of my theology. The first should be a black cross in a heart, which retains its natural color, so that I myself would be reminded that faith in the Crucified saves us. "For one who believes from the heart will be justified"

(Romans 10:10). Although it is indeed a black cross, which mortifies and which should also cause pain, it leaves the heart in its natural colour. It does not corrupt nature, that is, it does not kill but keeps alive. "The just shall live by faith" (**Romans 1:17**) but by faith in the crucified. Such a heart should stand in the middle of a white rose, to show that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace. In other words, it places the believer into a white, joyous rose, for this faith does not give peace and joy like the world gives (**John 14:27**). That is why the rose should be white and not red, for white is the color of the spirits and the angels (**Matthew 28:3; John 20:12**). Such a rose should stand in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that such joy in spirit and faith is a beginning of the heavenly future joy, which begins already, but is grasped in hope, not yet revealed. And around this field is a golden ring, symbolizing that such blessedness in Heaven lasts forever and has no end. Such blessedness is exquisite, beyond all joy and goods, just as gold is the most valuable, most precious and best metal. This is my compendium theologiae [summary of theology]. I have wanted to show it to you in good friendship, hoping for your appreciation. May Christ, our beloved Lord, be with your spirit until the life hereafter. *Amen.*"

Bible Verse: **John 14:27** *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives"*

Luther's Morning Prayer: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. *Amen.*



Open Communication – Differing Views: This short article is designed to invite and briefly inform. Contained in the Listening Team final report, someone asked how to have conversations with people who have different perspectives.

General: By listening and understanding where someone else is coming from, you give yourself the chance to learn new things, find common ground and become a better person. If you find that you disagree with someone, talking it out is an essential skill that can help build trust, strengthen relationships and grow as a person and Christian.

Here are some ways to turn a difficult conversation into a thoughtful discussion.

- a. Approach conversations with an open mind: Take some time to think about how *your* beliefs and opinions came to be. Stay open to learning how someone else's experiences have shaped *their* views, too.
- b. Prioritize listening: Try to listen with the goal of understanding and not just to respond.
- c. Practice effective communication strategies: Ask open-ended questions. Use reflections to clarify. Acknowledge different perspectives.

Remember, sometimes "*It is how you say it rather than what you say*". Communicate to understand and grow.

Bible Verse: Proverbs 12:18 "The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to communicate with clarity, love, and patience. Quiet my mind, open my ears to listen deeply and guide my tongue to speak words of kindness and truth. Remove pride and defensiveness from my heart and help me build bridges of understanding with others. Amen.

September 15, 2026 Congregational Council meeting Key Highlights

Celebrating "God's Work, Our Hands" Success!

A massive thank you to everyone who helped, donated, and participated in our recent "God's Work, Our Hands" event. Because of your incredible generosity and hard work, we made a tangible impact on our community:

- Fill the Truck Donation Drive:** We completely filled 2.5 box trucks with furniture, household goods, kitchenware, and clothing! The Opportunity House also made numerous direct home pickups.
- St. Mark's Food Trailer:** Our efforts raised \$308 through the free-will offering for the delicious food provided by the St. Mark's Food Trailer. The full \$308 is being donated directly to the Opportunity House. Thank you, St. Mark's!
- Lifesaving Donations:** Our community stepped up to donate 22 pints of blood during the Blood Drive.
- Wellness:** The community yoga class was very well attended.
- Worship:** Our sanctuary looked stunning covered in beautiful quilts, which Pastor Greg blessed during a wonderful service.

Council Updates & New Ministries

- Sexton Opening:** The Council reviewed and approved the official job description for our Sexton position. We have approved advertising the opening, so please share this opportunity with anyone who might be a good fit.
- Holiday Outreach:** In the spirit of seasonal giving, the Council approved partnering with Schwarzwald Lutheran Church to support their annual Exeter toy drive. Stay tuned for details on how you can contribute!
- Mutual Ministry Committee:** Council approved the formation and structural guidelines of a new Mutual Ministry Committee. The next step is to recruit 6 Steadfast, discreet members to serve on this committee.