

**A Service of Holy Communion for the
18th Sunday after Pentecost**
10:30 a.m. | September 27, 2026 | Year A
Lectionary 26



Photo by Jason Rigano, Construction Superintendent

University Lutheran Church
66 Winthrop St., Cambridge, MA
unilu.org

PRELUDE Solo II: Adagio; Poco allegro (from *Six Solos for Flute or Violin op. 4*) — John Stanley (1713–1786); figured bass realized by George Pratt; *Maria Hedberg, flute*

GATHERING

BELL AND WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. **And God called them good. Come, Holy Spirit, and cleanse the waters.**

The prophet saw a river flowing from the Temple, and wherever the river flowed, everything lived.

Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the Earth.

Jesus cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me. Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.”

Come, Holy Spirit, and heal your people.

Almighty and ever living God, we thank you for your love in all creation, and especially for your gift of water to sustain and cleanse all life. Christ is the living water, cleansing, refreshing, and making all things new. So now we offer our thanks for the waters that bring beauty to all that we enjoy, the wild places, the bush, the mountains, coast and the sea. We give thanks and praise for all good lands, for the trees and pastures, for our plentiful crops, and for the living water that quenches them.

We look upon your waters, O God, and we grieve: Rivers run polluted. Oceans choke with plastic. Marine life disappears from warming seas. Coral reefs fade and fisheries collapse. **We are sorry.**

The seas rise and swallow coasts. Storms grow stronger. Floods destroy homes. Drought cracks the Earth and children thirst. **We are sorry.**

We confess that we have not guarded your waters. We have consumed water without restraint. We have polluted what you called good. We have forgotten that the river of life flows from your throne. **Forgive us.**

God’s mercy flows like living water. The love of God, incarnate in Jesus who spoke to troubled waters, forgives us and calms our hearts so that justice may flow to all the dry places in our lives. In the name of Christ, may this grace free us to follow and proclaim the good news of the healing of all creation. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN

ELW 827 “Arise, My Soul, Arise!”

APOSTOLIC 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.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Refrain:



This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu-ia, al-le-lu - ia.

(to Refrain)

1. Wor-thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo-ple of God.

(to Refrain)

2. Pow-er, rich-es, wis-dom, and strength, and hon-or, bles-sing, and glo-ry are God's.

(to Refrain)

3. Sing with all the peo-ple of God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion:

(to Refrain)

Bless - ing, hon-or, glo - ry, and might be to God and the Lamb for-ev-er. A - men.

(to Refrain)

4. For the Lamb who was slain has be - gun to reign. Al-le - lu - ia.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

¹The word of the Lord came to me: ²What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins who shall die.

²⁵Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed, they shall die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM

Psalm 25

The congregation is invited to chant the response with the choir.



Response

Verses

LORD, make me know your ways, teach me your paths and keep me in the way of your truth, for you are God, my Savior. **Response**

For the LORD is good and righteous, revealing his way to those who seek him, gently leading the poor and the humble. **Response**

To the ones who seek the LORD, who look to his word, who live his love, he will always be near, he will show them his mercy. **Response**

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:1–13

¹If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.

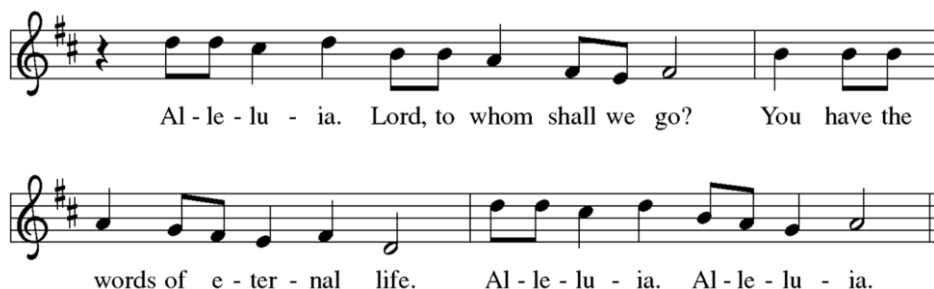
⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, ⁷but relinquished it all, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, ¹⁰so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for God's good pleasure.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL

Matthew 21:23–32

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

²³When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the dominion of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.”

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

SERMON

Carrie Ballenger

HYMN OF THE DAY

ELW 555 “Oh, Sing to God Above”

APOSTLES’ CREED

Living together in trust and hope, let us confess our faith using the words of the 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
and born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.**

**Who descended to the dead and on the third day rose again.
Who ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
Who will come again 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.**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Individuals will be invited to offer prayers aloud. Prayers may also be typed in the Zoom chat box to be read by the intercessor.

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

Each prayer petition may be concluded with one of following (or similar) responses:

God, in your mercy,

Bless we the Holy One!

Hear our prayer.

or

Thanks be to God!

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

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

OFFERTORY MUSIC "Ad te levavi" — Text: Psalm 25; setting: Franz Xaver Witt (1834–1888)

Ad te levavi animam meam: Deus meus, in te confido,
non erubescam, neque irrideant me inimici mei:
etenim universi qui te expectant non confundentur.

To you, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul: my God, I trust in you, let me
not be put to shame, nor let my enemies laugh at me:
for none of those who wait for you will be disappointed.

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Please visit unilu.org/giving if you would like to set up an electronic funds transfer, or a credit card donation on a recurring or one-time basis. You can also give by mailing a check to: 66 Winthrop St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

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.**

THE 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.

Detailed description: This block contains four staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and hymn-like, using mostly quarter and eighth notes with some ties. The lyrics are written below each staff, aligned with the notes.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . 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 -

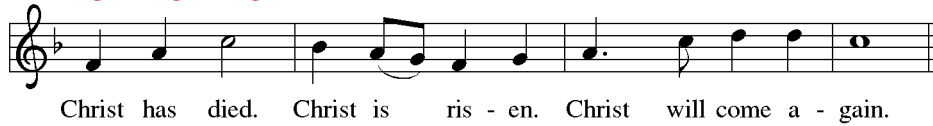
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Blest is the one who

comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

Detailed description: This block contains four staves of musical notation in G major. The melody continues from the previous section, featuring a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes. The lyrics are written below each staff, aligned with the notes.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

The thanksgiving may include this acclamation:



The thanksgiving may conclude:



LORD'S PRAYER

In the Bible, Jesus often speaks of God as "Abba," Father, reflecting a profound intimacy with the creator of all worlds. Here, we extend that intimacy to name God as our Mother.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us, using either the version printed in your bulletin or the version closest to your heart:

**God our Mother, God 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 RECEIVE AND SHARE COMMUNION

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

The body of Christ, given for you. **Amen.**
The blood of Christ, shed for you. **Amen.**

For those worshipping via Zoom, individuals may commune themselves and households may serve one another with the same words.

HYMNS DURING COMMUNION

ELW 701 “Once We Sang and Danced”

ELW 817 “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore”

TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in God’s grace. **Amen.**

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.**

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

May the God who sprung water from a rock, quenching the thirst of those who wandered in fear, spare us from the drought of a senseless life. May the God who flows from the wells of salvation, and who is Living Water to the foreigner, the stranger, and the unknown, keep us in peace. May the God who rolls on like a river, changing the course of the world with streams of righteousness that guide the Church’s vessel in this world, empower us to work for transformation. And may the blessing of our merciful God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, keep us and preserve us in eternal life. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN

ELW 621 “Jesus Lives, My Sure Defense”

DISMISSAL Go out in joy. Be led forth in peace. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE Solo II: Adagio; Menuet (from *Six Solos for Flute or Violin op. 4*) — John Stanley (1713–1786); figured bass realized by George Pratt

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE ARE ASKED FOR:

Cheri Agaskar — UniLu member

Polly Allen — UniLu member

Ellen Bartlett — sister of Gail Bucher

C. Paz Betancourt — mother of Ricardo Pulgar

Lorraine and Roland Blanchard — friends of Gail Bucher

Bruce Brolsma — Unilu Member

Ed Bucher — UniLu member

Gail Bucher — UniLu member

John Cobb — Pastor at Santiago Community Church, Chile

Gloria Contardi and Ricardo Ibarro — Ricardo Pulgar's aunt and her husband

Alice Conway — sister of Karin Kutrieb

Mary Jo Deets — mother of UniLu member Stephen Deets

Scott Evans — son-in-law of Nancy Gould

Bob Flannery — UniLu member

Nancy Gould — UniLu member

Pat Hermann Bruntz — cousin of Imogene Stulken

Charles Jaferian — grandson of Nancy Gould

Dr. Mariah Meyer Lefebber — Friend of Pr. Carrie and Brittany

Duncan McCoy Norton — son of Megan McCoy

Anne Minton — colleague of Imogene Stulken

Larry Nichols — UniLu member

The Ralston-Lamb family — UniLu members

Jeanette Searson — sister of Imogene Stulken

Kate Turley — mother of UniLu member Karen Turley

Carl Yanagawa — husband of Imogene Stulken's friend Sally Yanagawa

For our siblings at Faith Lutheran Church in Cambridge and their pastor, Robin Lutjohann.

For our siblings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church: including in Jordan and the Holy Land, including the staff of Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives and all those for whom they provide care; and the Christian Lutheran Church in Honduras, Iglesia Cristiana Luterana de Honduras (ILCH).

For all who are seeking refuge, who are facing immigration challenges, who have been deported to homes that are not home, and who have been separated from their families.

In the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, we remember the people of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, and Peru.

Serving the Community

Carrie Ballenger, *Pastor*

Gracious Moyo, *Associate Pastor*

Naomi Mbise, *Ministry Intern*

Ethan Strouse, *Office Administrator*

Lorraine Fitzmaurice, *Music Director—Choir / Building Manager*

Imogene Stulken, *Music Director—Organ*

Holly Druckman, *Tech Verger*

Ann Ferentz, *Council President*

Ed Bucher, *Treasurer and Bookkeeper*

Gail Bucher, *Service Deacon*

Chris Porter, *Financial Secretary*

Susan Worst, *Webmaster*

Joyce DeGreeff, *Lutheran Chaplain at Northeastern University*

Andrew Heisen, *Lutheran Chaplain at MIT*

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Serving Today

Presider: Carrie Ballenger; Assisting Minister: Anne Howarth;
Musicians: Imogene Stulken, Maria Hedberg, and Lorraine Fitzmaurice,
and the UniLu Choir; Lector: Chris Porter; Intercessor: Helen
Schwickerath; Hospitality: Emma Boettcher and Susan Worst

Land Acknowledgment: *University Lutheran Church is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Pawtucket and Massa-adchu-es-et (Massachusetts) peoples, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have called, and who continue to call, this land their home.*