



The Ascension of Our Lord

May 21, 2023

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Welcome to our worship of the Lord Jesus Christ on this Seventh Sunday of Easter! Today we're celebrating the Ascension of Our Lord; in today's readings the risen Christ ascends into heaven and His followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples are told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus (Acts 1:11); we find His presence among us as we proclaim the Word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

*Congregational responses are in **indented boldface italics**.*

GATHERING

GATHERING MUSIC

GATHERING HYMN: **"A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing" ELW 393**

You'll find the music for this hymn on the next page.

INVOCATION, CONFESSION, AND FORGIVENESS:

Blest are You, Holy and Triune God— the Wellspring of eternal life,
the ✙ Embodiment of death-defying love, the Spirit of rebirth and reconciliation!

You forgive us our sins; You raise us to newness of life!

Yet even though You've brought us through the night of sin
into the light of Jesus' resurrection,

we've still let our lives be shadowed by sin.

We've denied Your goodness in each other, in ourselves, and in the world You've created.

We've rejected Your way of life and pursued the ways of death.

We've trusted in our own strength rather than living in Yours,

only to find ourselves missing out on the love and life that are truly timeless.

Continued on page 3 ➤

A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing!



1 A hymn of glo - ry let us sing! New hymns through-out the world shall
2 The ho - ly ap - os - tol - ic band up - on the Mount of Ol - ives
3 To whom the shin - ing an - gels cry, "Why stand and gaze up - on the
4 "You see him now, as-cend-ing high up to the por-tals of the
5 O ris - en Christ, as-cend-ed Lord, all praise to you let earth ac -



ring: Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! Christ, by a road be - fore un -
stand, Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! and with his faith-ful fol-l'wers
sky?" Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! "This is the Sav - ior!" thus they
sky." Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! "Here - af - ter Je - sus you shall
cord: Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia! You are, while end-less ag - es



trod, as - cends un - to the throne of God.
see their Lord as-cend in maj - es - ty.
say, "this is his glo-rious tri - umph day!" Al-le - lu - ia! Al-le -
see re - turn - ing in great maj - es - ty."
run, with Fa - ther and with Spir - it one.



lu - ia! Al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia!

Text: Bede, 673–735; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*

Music: LASST UNS ERFREUEN, *Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1623

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After singing this hymn, return to page 1 for our Invocation, Confession, and Forgiveness.

INVOCATION, CONFESSION, AND FORGIVENESS (continued):

So hear us, O God, as we confess the brokenness of our lives—
the sin that everyone knows, and the sins we fear to name:

Silence for personal soul-searching and confession.

Forgive us our sin, and make us alive in Christ once more!

***Rescue us from evil and the gloom of sin, renew us in Your grace,
and raise us to life in Your holiness through Christ Jesus our risen Lord. Amen.***

Listen to the Good News, my friends:

God, who's rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin,
and made us alive together with Christ. By God's grace, you've been saved;
and in the name of ✝ Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven!

Now, buried with Christ in baptismal repentance and raised through His forgiveness,
let's walk with Christ in newness of life.

Amen. Thanks be to God!

HYMN OF PRAISE: "This is the Feast of Victory!"

Refrain

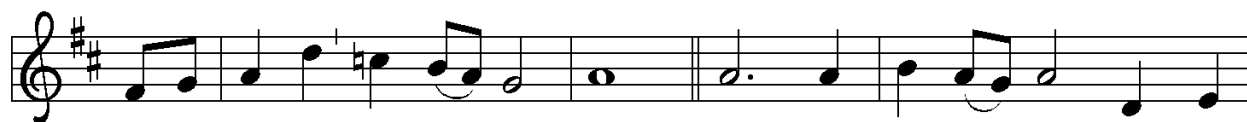
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. I Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb

who was slain, whose blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.

Refrain

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



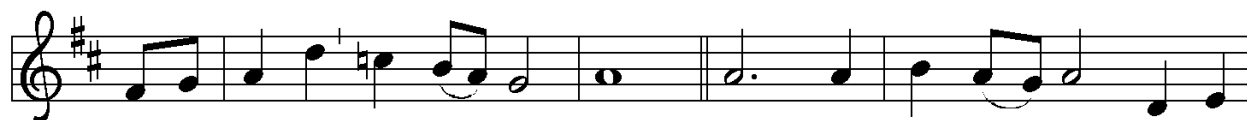
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 2 Pow - er, rich - es, wis - dom, and



strength, and hon - or, bless - ing, and glo - ry are his.



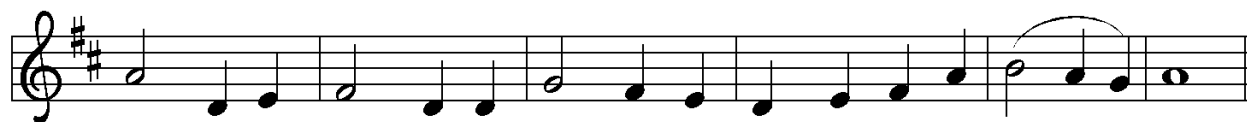
This is the feast of vic-to-ry for our God. Al-le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 3 Sing with all the peo - ple of



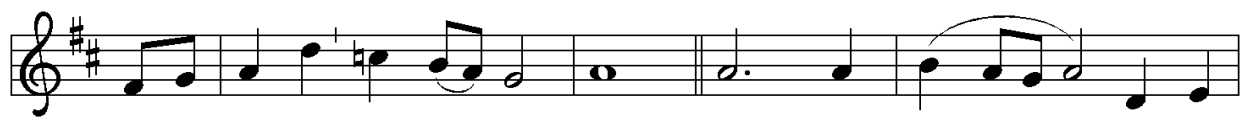
God, and join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion: Bless - ing, hon - or,



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



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



al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. 4 For the Lamb who was



slain has be - gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.



GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

And so the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit are with you all.

And also with you.

Then let's pray: Almighty God,
Your dear Son ascended far above the heavens that He might fill all things.
Give us faith to trust that, true to His promise, He abides with us on earth till the end of time;
for He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

WORD AND PRAYER

PREPARATION FOR THE WORD:

*Pr Dave will introduce this song to us;
then we'll sing it together once or twice to let the tune (and the promise) sink in...*

***Behold, behold—I make all things new, beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold, behold—I make all things new; My promise is true, for I am Christ the Way!***

FIRST READING:

Acts 1.1-14

NRSVUE



Luke writes: In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He'd chosen. ³After His suffering, He presented Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the Kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," He said, "is what you've heard from Me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you'll be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

⁶So when they'd come together, they asked Him, "Lord, is this the time when You'll restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He replied, "It's not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸But you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you'll be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹When He'd said this, as they were watching, *Jesus* was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. ¹⁰While He was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who's been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they'd entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as His brothers.

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

Thanks be to God!

SECOND READING:

Ephesians 1.15-23

NRSVUE

The apostle writes: I've heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I don't cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know Him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may perceive what's the hope to which He's called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what's the immeasurable greatness of His power for us who believe, according to the working of His great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that's named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. ²²And *God* has put all things under *Christ's* feet and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

Thanks be to God!

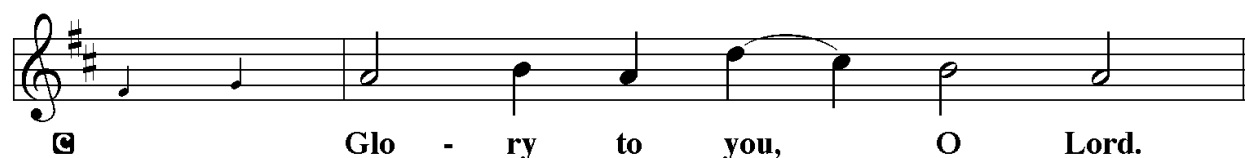


THE HOLY GOSPEL:

John 17.1-11

NRSVUE

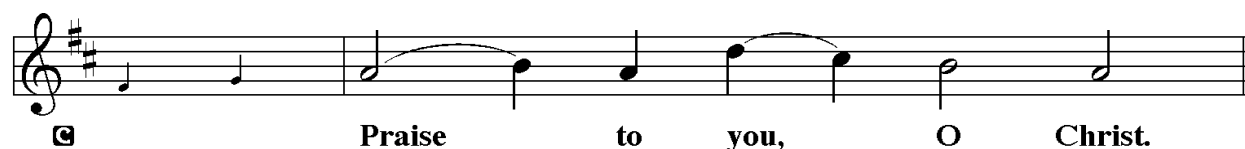
The Holy Gospel according to St John, the seventeenth chapter.



On the night before His death, after Jesus had spoken these words *to His disciples*, He looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, so that the Son may glorify You, ²since You’ve given Him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom You’ve given Him. (³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You’ve sent.) ⁴I glorified You on earth by finishing the work that You gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had in Your presence before the world existed.

⁶“I’ve made Your name known to those whom You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they’ve kept Your word. ⁷Now they know that everything You’ve given Me is from You, ⁸for the words that You gave to Me I’ve given to them, and they’ve received them and know in truth that I came from You, and they’ve believed that You sent Me. ⁹I’m asking on their behalf; I’m not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom You gave Me, because they’re Yours. ¹⁰All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I’ve been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I’m no longer in the world, but they *are* in the world, and I’m coming to You. Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You’ve given Me, so that they may be one, as We’re one...”

This is the Gospel of our Lord.



PROCLAMATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

HYMN OF THE DAY: “Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!”

ELW 631

You'll find the music for this hymn on the next page.

NICENE CREED:

Together with resurrection's children of every age, let's confess our faith:

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth— of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father:
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
He became incarnate from the virgin Mary and was made man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His Kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND SHARING OF PEACE:

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection,
let's pray for the church, the world, and all in need:

(go to page 10 →)

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus



1 Al - le - lu - ia! Sing to Je - sus; his the scep - ter,
 2 Al - le - lu - ia! Not as or - phans are we left in
 3 Al - le - lu - ia! Bread of heav - en, here on earth our
 4 Al - le - lu - ia! King e - ter - nal, Lord om - nip - o -
 5 Al - le - lu - ia! Sing to Je - sus; his the scep - ter,



his the throne; Al - le - lu - ia! his the tri - umph, his the
 sor - row now; Al - le - lu - ia! he is near us; faith be -
 food, our stay; Al - le - lu - ia! here the sin - ful flee to
 tent we own; Al - le - lu - ia! born of Mar - y, earth your
 his the throne; Al - le - lu - ia! his the tri - umph, his the



vic - to - ry a - lone. Hark! The songs of peace - ful
 lieves, nor ques - tions how. Though the cloud from sight re -
 you from day to day. In - ter - ces - sor, friend of
 foot - stool, heav'n your throne. As with - in the veil you
 vic - to - ry a - lone. Hark! The songs of peace - ful



Zi - on thun - der like a might - y flood: "Je - sus
 ceived him when the for - ty days were o'er, shall our
 sin - ners, earth's re - deem - er, hear our plea where the
 en - tered, robed in flesh, our great high priest, here on
 Zi - on thun - der like a might - y flood: "Je - sus



out of ev - 'ry na - tion has re - deemed us by his blood."
 hearts for - get his prom - ise: "I am with you ev - er - more?"
 songs of all the sin - less sweep a - cross the crys - tal sea.
 earth both priest and vic - tim in the eu - cha - ris - tic feast.
 out of ev - 'ry na - tion has re - deemed us by his blood."

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898, alt.

Music: HYFRYDOL, Rowland H. Prichard, 1811-1887

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND SHARING OF PEACE [contd.]:

Good and gracious God, we praise You for Your Son Jesus, whom You carried up into heaven and seated at Your right hand so that even beyond our sight He might be everywhere present, not only in this age but also in the age to come. Enliven Your people to live authentically as Christ's body alive in the world; guide our leaders to lead with visionary wisdom; and make all Your baptized people active witnesses to Your mercy and might. God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

We thank You for the springtime greening of the good earth around us, and for the promise of rich harvests that drives and sustains our planting. Preserve Your good creation from disastrous climate; safeguard animals and their young, and protect trees and bushes around us, that all may enjoy their fruit and beauty. God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

We acclaim You as sovereign over the heavens, the earth, and time itself. Let Your peace triumph in every land where oppression, terror, and chaos hold sway, especially Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, Israel, Palestine, the DRC, Central America, in every community, and in every heart. Stir up Your Spirit among us, that our leaders may govern with wisdom, compassion, and mercy for the most vulnerable. God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

We know that even though we can't see You now in a form that we'd consider glorious, You still come to meet us in our vulnerable neighbors and call us together to the bounty of Your table of grace. Let Your Holy Spirit flow through us in grace and mercy, that the poor among us may be fed and clothed and housed, the unemployed may find jobs, the grieving may be comforted, the despairing may find new hope, and those we name before You may receive Your healing and newness of life... God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

You promise new life for all the faithful departed, especially... and You promise to wipe away every tear from our eyes. Give us the assurance, even amidst our grief, that all who live and die in You will rest forever beside the river of life; and renew us in faith and hope until the day when death is no more, when You'll dwell with us in the new heaven and earth. God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ's resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to You, almighty and eternal God, through Christ Jesus our risen Lord. *Amen.*

The peace of the Lord is with you always. *And also with you.*

Reconciled to God and to one another, we share a sign of Christ's peace.

MEAL

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES

OFFERTORY HYMN: “Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful”



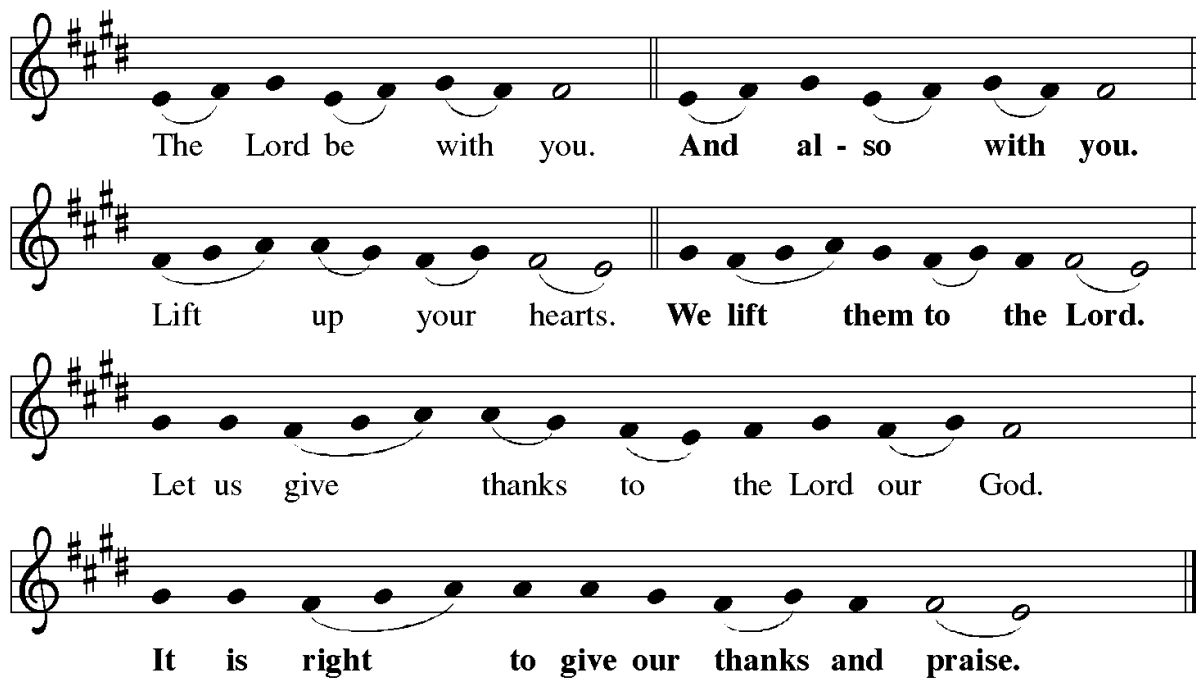
Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be
fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

Generous God, in this meal You offer Your very self.
We give thanks for these gifts of the earth.
In the breaking of this bread, reveal to us the Risen One;
in the pouring of this wine, pour us out in service to the world;
through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING:





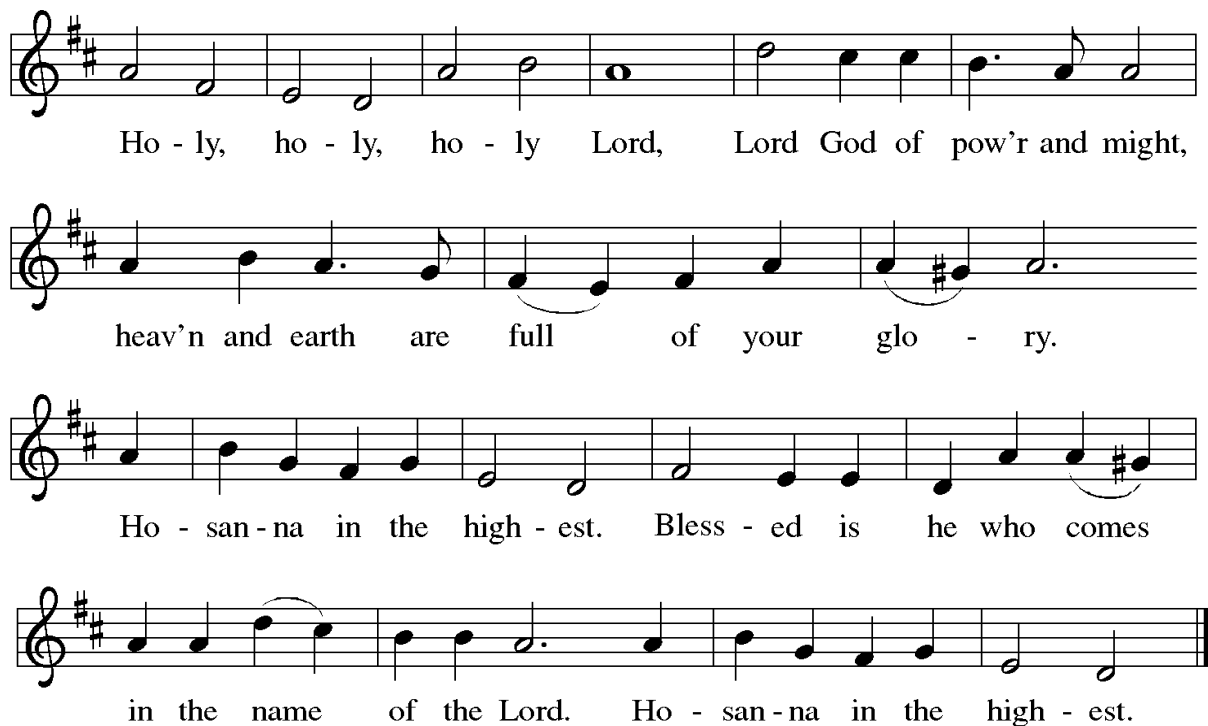
The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

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.

It's indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should always and everywhere give thanks and praise to You, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord, who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by His glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection, with earth and sea and all their creatures, and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, we praise your Name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,

heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.

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.

In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, 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."

And so, remembering all that our Lord has done for us, believing the witness of His resurrection, awaiting His final appearing in glory, we share this foretaste of the feast to come. Now send Your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as He comes to us in His holy Supper. Empower us by that same Spirit to love and forgive, that our lives may anticipate that day when You'll make all things new. All this we pray with joy through our Lord Jesus Christ, who's taught us to pray:

***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.***

CANTICLE: "Lamb of God"

>

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.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Now we share God's consecrated gifts among God's consecrated people, knowing that our living Lord Jesus is fully present with us in His Supper, giving Himself to us in bread and wine and forgiving love. Today, we'll share the Lord's Supper by receiving the body and blood of Christ at communion "stations" at the altar rail. Come forward a pew at a time; take an empty glass from the tray, or a glass already filled with grape juice if necessary. Receive **"the body of Christ, given for you"** from the Pastor; receive **"the blood of Christ, shed for you"** from our communion assistant. We'll pause for silent prayer after we've all communed...

If you're joining us from your home, we invite you to share the bread and cup with one another. When giving the bread to your neighbor, say **"The body of Christ, given for you."** When giving the wine/grape juice say, **"The blood of Christ, shed for you."** Whatever's left over may be reverently eaten and drunk by everyone after our worship is over. Once we've all shared in the body and blood of Christ, we continue in blessing and prayer:

SENDING

THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, AND BENEDICTION:

May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen us and keep us in His grace.

Amen.



☐ Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev-'ry-one what he has done.



Let ev-'ry-one who seeks the Lord re-joice and proud-ly bear his name.



He re-calls his prom-is-es and leads his peo-ple forth in joy



with shouts of thanks-giv-ing. Al-le-lu-ia. Al-le-lu-ia.

Gracious God, in You we live and move and have our being.
With Your word and this meal of grace, You've nourished our life together.
Strengthen us to show Your love and serve the world in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

And now may the God of Life, who raised Christ Jesus from death,
empower you by the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life;
and Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: “Christ is Alive—Let Christians Sing!”
ELW 389

See the following page for the words and music to this hymn.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DISMISSAL:

God has a plan.

We're it!

What's our part in God's plan?

Sharing God's love in joyful service!

Then let's go in peace, serve in joy, and live out the new life of our risen Lord!

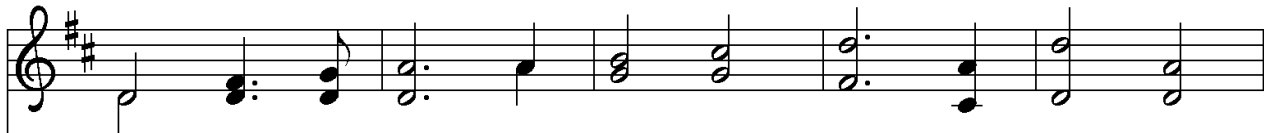
Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!



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Christ Is Alive! Let Christians Sing



1 Christ is a - live! Let Chris - tians sing. The cross stands
2 Christ is a - live! No long - er bound to dis - tant
3 In ev - 'ry in - sult, rift, and war, where col - or,
4 Wom - en and men, in age and youth, can feel the
5 Christ is a - live, and comes to bring good news to



emp - ty to the sky. Let streets and homes with
years in Pal - es - tine, but sav - ing, heal - ing,
scorn, or wealth di - vide, Christ suf - fers still, yet
Spir - it, hear the call, and find the way, the
this and ev - 'ry age, till earth and sky and



prais - es ring. Love, drowned in death, shall nev - er die.
here and now, and touch - ing ev - 'ry place and time.
loves the more, and lives, where e - ven hope has died.
life, the truth, re - vealed in Je - sus, freed for all.
o - cean ring with joy, with jus - tice, love, and praise.



Text: Brian A. Wren, b. 1936

Music: TRURO, T. Williams, *Psalmody Evangelica*, 1789

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That They May Be One

To ask what role prayer plays in our world right now is to raise the hardest questions I can think of about God. Honestly, they are questions I don't know how to answer. Does God routinely intervene in human affairs? Does God's intervention (or lack of it) depend in any way on our asking? Can prayer "change" God, change circumstances, change *us*?

Whatever the answers to these questions might be, we know one thing for sure: Jesus prayed. Jesus asked. Jesus made supplication to God. On this last Sunday of Easter, we're invited to listen in as Jesus makes a "High Priestly Prayer" to His Father. The setting for His prayer is the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday, and the mood in the room as Jesus talks to God is heavy and poignant. He's just said goodbye to His disciples, and every word, deed, and gesture He's offered them is weighted with grief. He's washed their feet, fed them bread and wine, promised them the Holy Spirit, and commanded them to love one another. He's spoken to them with both tenderness and urgency, as if time is running out— because it is...

Now, in the last moments before His arrest, He looks up to heaven and articulates His heart's deepest desires to God. "I'm asking," He says. "*I'm asking...*"

I've heard some people call Jesus' "high priestly prayer" the "other" Lord's Prayer, the one we don't memorize and recite on Sunday mornings. It's not pithy and poetic like the "Our Father." It doesn't flow or cover its bases with anything like efficiency; it's long, rambling, and rather hard to follow. And though the disciples are meant to overhear the words, Jesus' tone has an urgency and passion to it that's achingly private. Jesus is doing more than teaching in this moment; He's rending His heart.

In his beautiful book entitled, *Tokens of Trust*, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, describes the strangeness and wonder of a Jesus who prays: "Yes, Jesus is a human being in whom God's action is at work without interruption or impediment. But wait a moment: the Jesus we meet in the Gospels is someone who prays, who speaks of putting His will and His decisions at the service of His Father. He's someone who's in a relationship of dependence on the one He prays to as Father. In Him, there's divine purpose, power, and action— but there's also humility, responsiveness, and receptivity."

I'm inclined to add one more word to Archbishop Williams' list: **vulnerability**. Jesus spends His final hours on earth in humble, vulnerable supplication to God. He ends His ministry by asking into uncertainty, hoping into doubt, trusting into danger. His praying, His asking, is the last act of love He pours out to the disciples gathered around His table. It's the last tender memory He gives them, the last gesture of hope He extends. Contrary to what we might expect (or prefer), He doesn't awe His followers with a grand finale of miracles, or humble them with a show of divine authority and power. He looks up to heaven with a trembling heart, and surrenders His cherished friends to God.

“I’m asking... requesting... hoping...” As if to say: “God, I don’t know what You’ll do with My request. I don’t know how or when or if You’ll answer this prayer. I can’t force Your hand. But I’m staking my life and the lives of My loved ones on Your goodness, because there’s literally nothing more I can do on My own. I’ve come to the end of what this aching love of Mine can hold and guard and save. I’m asking...”

There are so many tough questions to ask about prayer right now, and it’s okay for us to ask them. But even in the midst of our questioning, it’s important to remember that Jesus spent His last hours modeling heartfelt conversation with God. Perhaps the takeaway for us is that when all else falls away, prayer remains. Even when circumstances feel dire, prayer offers us a sturdy bridge between our hearts and God’s, between our questions and God’s promises, between our longings and God’s grace. Prayer paves a way forward into renewed hope, strength, meaning, and possibility.

But that’s just the *fact* of prayer. What about its content? What does Jesus ask *for* in His high priestly prayer? Well, many things, but one request stands out to me right now— not least because it hasn’t been answered yet: “Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You’ve given Me, so that they may be one, as We’re one.”

That they may be one... Earlier in John’s Gospel, Jesus commands His disciples to love one another so that “everyone will know” that they’re followers of Christ. On the night before His death, Jesus declares the loving unity of His disciples *the* litmus test of Christian witness. Our ability to love one another across differences, our willingness to preserve and cherish our God-ordained oneness, is precisely how the world will know who we are and whose we are. Our love for each other is how the world will see, taste, touch, hear, and find Jesus. It’s through our unity that we’ll embody Jesus, make Jesus relatable, possible, plausible, to a dying world.

I can’t speak for you, but this makes me tremble right now, because the signs of our disunity are everywhere. What Jesus seems to be saying is that if we fail to reconcile and unify, if we normalize divisiveness, separation, bitterness, and discord, the world won’t know what it needs to know about God, and in the terrible absence of that knowing, it’ll believe falsehoods that break God’s heart. It’ll believe that the whole Jesus thing is a sham. It’ll assume that there really is no transformative power in the death and resurrection of Christ. It’ll decide that God’s a mean, angry, vindictive parent, determined only to shame and punish His children. It’ll believe that the universe is a cold, meaningless place, ungoverned by love. It’ll write off the Church as a flawed and hypocritical institution— not Christ’s living, breathing, healing body on earth.

Such is the power we wield in our decisions to love or not love, to “be one” or to be divided. Such are the stakes involved in how we choose to respond to Jesus’ dying wish, hope, prayer, and commandment. Such is the responsibility we shoulder, whether we want to or not...

What scares me most about Jesus’ prayer for our unity is that I’m numb to the aching desire at its heart. I’m apathetic; I’m complacent; I’m cynical. I take Christian disunity so completely for granted, I barely notice it anymore. What breaks God’s heart no longer breaks mine. I’m *not* scandalized, as I should be, by the fact that we Christians have more denominations,

communions, and splinter groups than I can count. I barely bat an eye when another local church splits into two. I don't grieve over the fact that I can "church shop," as if churches fall into the same consumerist categories as clothes, shoes, houses, or hair products.

And yet Jesus spent His last night on earth pleading for the unity of His followers, praying that the Church would be one as He and the Father are one— not uniform, but unified, committed to a sacred tie that binds, determined to love, reconcile, bless, and unify across all barriers.

Two thousand years after Jesus prayed for unity, maybe we can begin by praying for it, too. Maybe we can realign our desires with Jesus', and ask God for an end to complacency, cynicism, hopelessness, and defeat. "That they may be one" remains God's cherished desire. May it become ours as well...

✦ *Debie Thomas*

Beginning at Jerusalem

Begin in the brightly painted kitchens.
At the table set for supper
and on the wide couches where we watch TV. Begin
while we are sorting
the laundry, writing out the shopping list.
And in front of our bathroom mirrors.

Begin in the barns among the warmth of animals
and the smells of grain and manure.
Begin in the growing fields, and in the flooded
pastures, and where the rains have not come
and the soil is cracked and hard.

Begin in the gleaming office towers, the shiny
shopping malls, the sweaty factory floors.
Begin on crumbling sidewalks and amid
the rumble of subways, at machines, at our desks,
by the coffee makers and computers.

Begin with the rich, the comfortable.
Begin with the poor, the desperate.
Among the successful, the self-assured.
Among the failed and the floundering.
In the glitter of the halls of power,
and in the cold and shadowed corners
of tragedy and defeat.

Begin on a day when the sun is brilliant;
on a day when the sky is gray.
In a time when economies are favorable;
in a time when all is rust;
at the moment when leaders are caring;
or amid indifference, hostility, despair.

Let us begin beginning again. And whether
we have begun and triumphed, or begun
and struggled and faltered, we will continue
our beginning, as we have from our beginning,
at Jerusalem,
which is wherever and whoever we are.

✦ *Andrew King*

This Week at St Paul's

P = Parish House, F = Fellowship Hall

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Sun. 5/21 Easter 7 – Ascension Sunday	9:00 AM	Holy Communion in person and online: www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live
	10:30 AM	Sunday School and Fellowship Hour [F]
Mon. 5/22	5:30 PM	Worship and Music Team via Zoom/FCC*
Wed. 5/24	6:30 PM	Confirmation Class @ Yerger Bldg. (Trinity, Quakertown)
Thur. 5/25	10:00 AM	Bible Study via Zoom/FCC*
	6:00 PM	Cub Scouts Pack 007 Open House
	7:00 PM	Scouts BSA Troop 007
Fri. 5/26	1:00 PM	Al-Anon [F]
	7:00 PM	AA [P]
Sun. 5/28 Pentecost	9:00 AM	Holy Communion in person and online: www.facebook.com/StPaulsQtown/live
	10:30 AM	Fellowship Hour [F]

- * If you'd like to participate in these ***activities taking place over Pr Dave's Zoom platform***, go to **zoom.us**, click "Join a Meeting" at the top right of the page, use meeting ID 3700147169, and if it asks for a password, use 119805 and you should be in. If you're using your phone, these dial-in numbers will work: 929.205.6099 or 312.626.6799. After you dial, you'll be asked for the host's code, and you'll type in 3700147169#, then 119805# and you're in. (What's more, with your smart phone or computer, you can engage video as well as audio, so we can see and hear you—something that's precious right now!) You can also use ***Free Conference Call [FCC]***: Dial 857.232.0157, enter conference code 144261, and you're in.

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK:

- The Armed Forces, President Biden and his cabinet, Crossroads Pregnancy Care, David & Mary Johnson Sr., Morgan, Ally, Dontay, & Emily Hassler, Andrew Edmonds, Don & Karen Ludovici, Derek & Matt Ludovici, Barbara Graser, Bob Knapp, Bob & Charyl Westervelt, Connie Slotter, Norm Diehl Sr., Amy Miller, Karen Capella, Chrissy Cousins, Bob Shimalla, Robert & Cheryl Ball, Melissa Manhart, Tammy Zepiora, Aaron Hamlin, Gary Hertzog, David & Carol Marks, Katie, Cassidy Owens, David Gullett, Kelly & Jim, Kelsey Shaak, John Apple, Dr Jenn Phelps, Karen K., Bill Baringer, Keith, Joe, Ron Diehl, Annabelle Weller, Kelly, Kareem, Bret & Layann, Dr Stephen Motsay, Brenda Oelschlager, Brody, Sens. John Fetterman and Bob Casey, former Pres. Jimmy Carter, Roy Weidner, Bill Schumacher Jr., Jack Lawrence, Cindy Cunnane, Michael Ludovici, Pr John Hansen, Pr Robert Lescallette, Paul Ahlum Jr., Pr Erika Wesch; the people of Afghanistan and Ukraine; victims of natural disasters and gun violence; everyone struggling with COVID-19 and its containment.

- Families and friends of Kamryn Jenkins, Martha Reumann, Pr John Stevens Kerr, Patti Jo Zackowski, Ray Constable, Pr John Keating.

Serving in Worship Today:

Usher:	<i>Volunteer Needed</i>	Altar Guild:	Aundie Hamlin, Joyce Kober,
Communion:	Bill Baringer		Marie Shaw
Acolyte:	Linda Hertzog	Bulletin:	Kelly Shaak
Counter:	Sara George	Reader:	Brice Krogslund

Today's bulletins are sponsored by Bob Westervelt in honor of his 24th wedding anniversary on May 8.

Come join us for **Sunday School at St Paul's** today, **May 21** after worship. It's our last blast of the season before summer comes, and it won't be the same without you here—so come join us! **Many thanks** to all our teachers who helped out this year, and to Stefanie Bauman for overseeing, teaching, and planning our Sunday School classes this year.

Come join us this Thursday from **10:00 AM-12:00 NN** via Zoom or Free Conference call for our **Thursday Morning Bible Study**. We're digging into the Scripture readings for the upcoming week to discover the treasures that await us come Sunday. You don't have to be a biblical "expert" to get a lot out of this study— so come join us and invite your friends as well!

Lutheran Disaster Response continues to work with companions in Ukraine, Turkey, Syria, and in our own land to providing refugees and disaster victims with immediate support and supplies as well as pastoral and psychological support and long-term reconstruction efforts— and we can be partners in those relief and rebuilding efforts. For more information or to give, go to www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response/Ways-to-Give. You can send your donations to Lutheran Disaster Response, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. Your gifts will be used entirely (100%) to provide support for people impacted by these disasters.

Our Social Ministry Team is now helping to **pack food bags at the Quakertown Food Pantry** the first Thursday of every month from 1:00-3:00 PM. No experience is necessary— everyone's welcome to provide this vital ministry to the community. In addition to our first-Thursday-of-the-month volunteering at the Food Pantry, you can also come in on Mondays, 10:00 AM-1:00 PM to serve at the front desk (keeping a record of customers) or as a "shopper" (adding the perishable items to the pre-packaged grocery bags). Contact Sara George (primrose40@aol.com or 215.538.3786) or Food Pantry coordinator Donna Sorok (215.313.4644 cell) if you're interested in helping.

In addition, we encourage you to **bring in canned goods** to donate to the Quakertown Food Pantry. You can place your donations in the narthex for pickup. (And on top of all this, our **Monthly Special** recipient for May is the **Quakertown Food Pantry**. Please give as you're able!)

Stewardship Note: Our congregation's expenses for 2023 have already exceeded our income by almost \$11,000. Please prayerfully consider how you might support our ministry together. If you'd like to give electronically (via Simply Giving, our church website, or some other electronic means) and would like some information on how to do that, please contact the church office.

"Switchfoot", an alternative Christian rock band, will be performing at Quakertown's Univest Performance Center on **Saturday, July 8**. Tickets are now on sale at QuakertownEvents.com starting at \$35 for lawn seats and \$45-\$120 for reserved seating. Concert begins at 6:00 PM.

Joyful Noise Raffles begin! Tickets for our Joyful Noise raffle of a king-size handmade quilt have now been completed and are ready for distribution to willing sellers. If you can help sell raffle tickets, please see Linda Hertzog; raffle tickets are in color and show a picture of the beautiful quilt that's being raffled. Thank you to Rita Feikel for purchasing the quilt and donating it to Joyful Noise!

"Paint St Paul's": Back in 2022, we completed the painting of St Paul's inside and out at a cost of \$19,900, which we withdrew from our investments until we finished raising funds for our parking lot renovation. Now that we've successfully exceeded our fundraising goal for the "Lots of Love" campaign, we're ready to raise the funds to repay our investments for the painting. A form for making a pledge toward this campaign is available in the pews. Please prayerfully consider what you can donate toward this worthy cause as we welcome all to St Paul's.

Do you know someone from St Paul's who's **graduating this spring**? If so, please send their name, the school they're graduating from, and their degree to the church office so we may recognize them in our bulletins and newsletter.

Geraniums for Pentecost are now waiting to be sponsored. We've ordered 20 plants to adorn our chancel. Please use the insert in your bulletin and place in the offering plate or the gray box on the windowsill in the breezeway. Cost per geranium is \$7.50. Thank you! **Orders due today!**

With the upcoming sale of the Parish House, there's been a lot of traffic in and out of the building. The house has been found unlocked a few times; please be sure to **double-check the locks when leaving the building**. And many thanks to everyone who's volunteering their time to go through everything in the Parish House to get the house ready for sale/move.

For the latest announcement updates, go to:

docs.google.com/document/d/1aZi_lL0SHaQ1BOGFS_s3bt0oHoTQ4fCy9tO372PZioE/edit#



Vacation Bible School

August 7-11, 2023

5:30 PM

Light Dinner

6:00-8:00 PM

Program

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→ **PERFORMERS** ←

St. Paul's Joyful Noise Band Uplifting contemporary Christian music	Seasons Vibrant Celtic Ho-Folk
Senor Fancypants Indie-pop tunes especially for children	Denia Shanelle and her band Philadelphia-based contemporary Christian artist
Once Called Saul Quakertown-based Christian rock band	Bob Halligan, Jr. Inspiring and joyful tunes from this nationally-known singer/songwriter and leader of Civil Rain
Craig Thatcher Internationally-known guitar master performs with Cliff Starkey on keyboard and vocals	The 307 Pennridge-area rock band

HELP FEED THE HUNGRY IN OUR COMMUNITY!

QUESTIONS?
 Call the office weekdays at 215-536-5789 • STPAULSQTOWN.ORG

For more information on our ministries, please contact:

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