



Sunday, September 27, 2026
10:00 am Worship Service
18th Sunday of Pentecost

Mission Statement: Compelled by God's love and our faith in Jesus Christ, Unity Church, a diverse people of faith, seeks to realize God's dream for the world through worship, learning, giving, and serving.

Core Values: We love children. Serve Christ with courage. Embrace diversity. Nurture community. Be an advocate for justice and peace.

Vision Statement: We are called to Reach Up, Reach In and Reach Out

(302) 658-5288 UnityChurchELCA@gmail.com
2101 Lancaster Avenue, Wilmington, DE 19805
www.unitywilmington.org

We invite you to contact Unity's staff members:

The Rev. Brian K. Sanders, Lead Pastor
443-676-2239; bks0808@aol.com

The Rev. Dr. Melissa P. Lemons, Pastor for Community Ministry
melissalemons@gmail.com; 302-803-8866
Office hours: by appointment

Norwood Coleman, Jr., PhD, Music Director
Mrs. Sharlene Drummond, Choir Director

YOU CAN ACCESS US ON SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9:30AM ON YOUTUBE, UNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, WILMINGTON, DE WITH THE CURRENT SUNDAY DATE. FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, USE LINK BELOW.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCN4vkddPnbKEzTKIFg-Lkvg>

“Enter to Worship”

*Those who are able are invited to stand ** **Please, no walking or standing during this time.** **BOLD PRINT:** Congregation responds, P: Presider, A: Assisting Minister/Worship Leader. Where you see a ✠, you are invited to make the sign of the cross.

THE GATHERING

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

PRAISE & WORSHIP

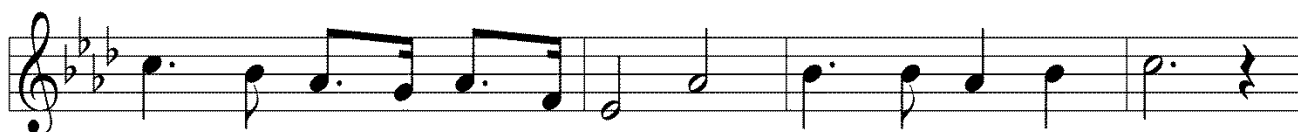
RINGING OF THE BELLS

Introduction

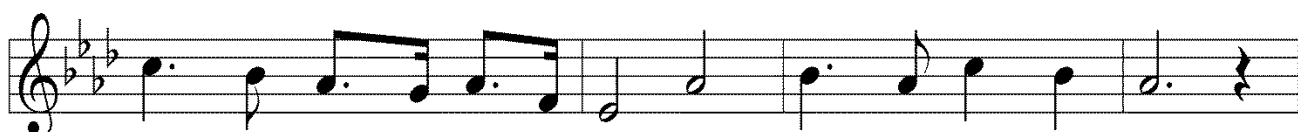
A: Jesus’ parable about two sons who don’t do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.

OPENING HYMN-“PASS ME NOT, O GENTLE SAVIOR” TFF 150
Please Stand

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

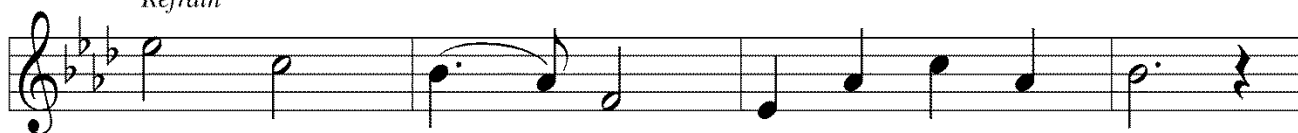


- 1 Pass me not, O gen - tle Sav - ior, hear my hum - ble cry;
- 2 Let me at thy throne of mer - cy find a sweet re - lief;
- 3 Trust - ing on - ly in thy mer - it, would I seek thy face;
- 4 Thou, the spring of all my com - fort, more than life to me,



while on oth - ers thou art call - ing, do not pass me by.
 kneel - ing there in deep con - tri - tion, help my un - be - lief.
 heal my wound - ed, bro - ken spir - it, save me by thy grace.
 whom have I on earth be - side thee? Whom in heav'n but thee?

Refrain



Sav - ior, Sav - ior, hear my hum - ble cry;



while on oth - ers thou art call - ing, do not pass me by.

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820–1915

Music: PASS ME NOT, William H. Doane, 1832–1915

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM (Please Stand)

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. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

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.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A or P: 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 *(Please be seated)*

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

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.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-9 (READ RESPONSIVELY)

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³Let none who look to you be put to shame; rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

⁴**Show me your ways, O LORD, and teach me your paths.**

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

⁶ **Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.**

⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

⁸ **You are gracious and upright, O LORD; therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹ You lead the lowly in justice and teach the lowly your way.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13

¹ If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, ⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, ¹⁰ so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and 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 his good pleasure.
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (Please Stand)**

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

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

GOSPEL

P: The Holy Gospel according to: **Matthew 21:23-32**

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

Gospel:

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." ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he 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.' ²⁹ He answered, 'I will not,' but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. ³¹ Which 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 kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For 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 our Lord. **Praise to you , O Christ**

HYMN OF THE DAY – "COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS" TFF 173

When Upon Life's Billows

Count Your Blessings



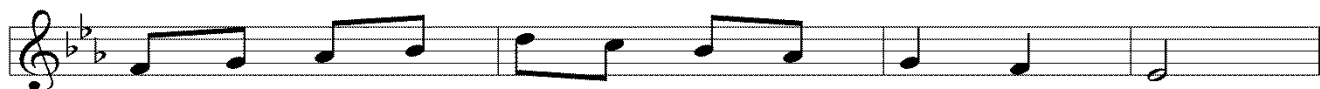
1 When up - on life's bil - lows you are tem - pest - toss'd,
 2 Are you ev - er bur - dened with a load of care?
 3 When you look at oth - ers with their lands and gold,
 4 So, a - mid the con - flict, wheth - er great or small,



when you are dis - cour - aged, think - ing all is lost,
 Does the cross seem heav - y you are called to bear?
 think that Christ has prom - ised you his wealth un - told;
 do not be dis - heart - ened, God is o - ver all;



count your man - y bless - ings, name them one by one,
 Count your man - y bless - ings, ev - 'ry doubt will fly,
 count your man - y bless - ings, wealth can nev - er buy
 count your man - y bless - ings, an - gels will at - tend,

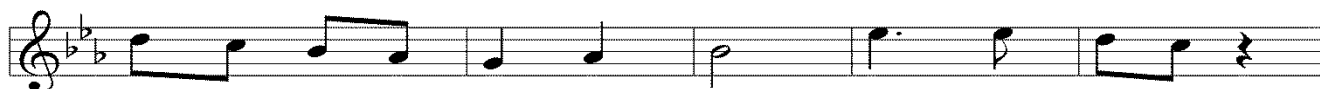


and it will sur - prise you what the Lord has done.
 and you will keep sing - ing as the days go by.
 your re - ward in heav - en, nor your home on high.
 help and com - fort give you to your jour - ney's end.



Refrain

Count your bless - ings, name them one by one; count your



bless - ings, see what God has done! Count your bless - ings,



name them one by one; and it will sur - prise you what the Lord has done.

Text: Johnson Oatman Jr., 1856–1922
 Music: BLESSINGS, Edwin O. Excell, 1851–1921

SERMON

PASTOR BRIAN SANDERS

Notes...

APOSTLES CREED (Please Stand)

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell.* 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 Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Or, "he descended to the dead," another translation of this text in widespread use.
From sundaysandseasons.com.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (Please sit, stand or kneel)

A: Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us. *A brief silence.*

Center your church in humility as we strive to follow in your way. Help us listen to the cries of those who have been unfairly hurt by the church and dare to name difficult truths. Show all your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You call us to care for your creation. Lead us into your promise of a better world through sustainable practices and respect for your handiwork. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Inspire all in positions of authority to act honorably. Remind them of their call to use their authority for the sake of the common good. Give them the gift of humility. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Comfort those who come before you in fear and trembling. Calm troubled hearts with your forgiveness. Help all those in need (*especially*). Grant us your salvation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Change this congregation's heart when we say no to your call. Open us to courageous learning and service in our community, especially in new or challenging places. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your steadfast love holds all the saints who have finished their work and are at rest. As we grieve, remind us of your mercy so we may also give thanks. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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.**

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always

C: **And also with you.** Please share a sign of Christ's peace.

OFFERING

(God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9:7, 8)

(During the offering, the ushers will pass the offering plates moving from back to front while a musical selection is played. Then the congregation will sing the Offertory hymn printed below.)

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -

new a right spir - it with - in me.

Cast me not a - way from your pres - ence, and take not your

Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -

store to me the joy of your sal - va - tion, and up -

hold me with your free Spir - it.

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re -

new a right spir - it with - in me.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: 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

All are welcome to communion

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: 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.

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. We remember and proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in Christ's death and resurrection. We look with hope for the Lord's coming and ask... **Come, Lord Jesus. Come Holy Spirit. Amen**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered as one by the Holy Spirit, we pray as Jesus taught us:

(Alternate/modern versions of prayer in This Far by Faith p. 3, WOV p. 39)

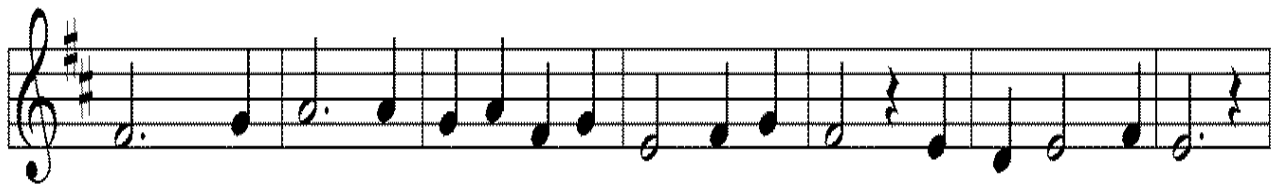
C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom

come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

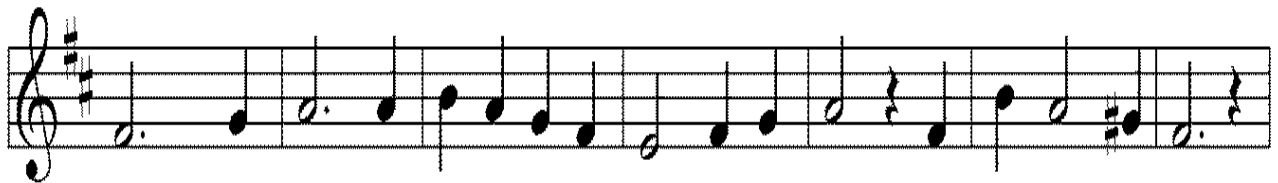
INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Christ invites you to this table.

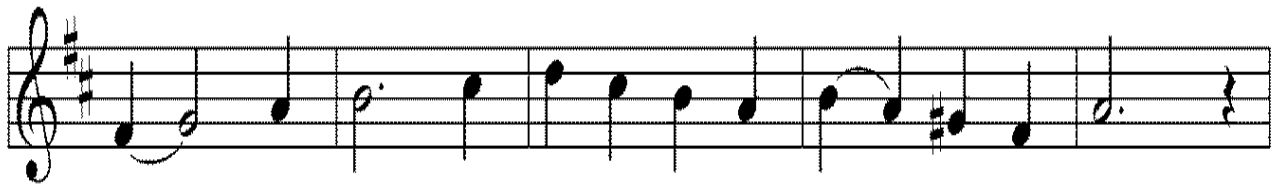
All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!



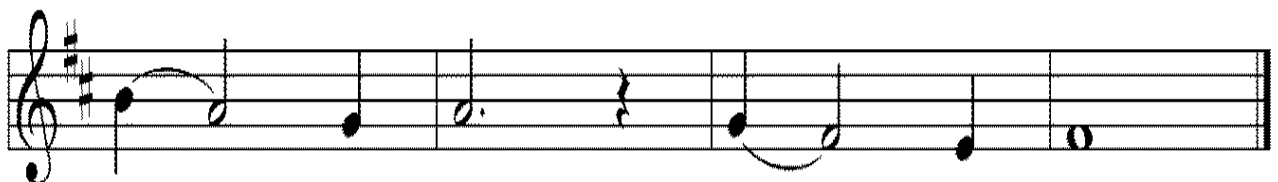
Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



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.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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.

THE SENDING

God blesses us and sends us to minister to the world.

BLESSING

P: 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.**

**SENDING HYMN– “THE SPIRIT SENDS US FORTH” ELW 551 Please
Stand**

The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve

1 The Spir - it sends us forth to serve; we go in
 2 We go to com - fort those who mourn and set the
 3 We go to be the hands of Christ, to scat - ter
 4 Then let us go to serve in peace, the gos - pel

Je - sus' name to bring glad tid - ings
 bur - dened free; where hope is dim, to
 joy like seed and, all our days, to
 to pro - claim. God's Spir - it has em -

to the poor, God's fa - vor to pro - claim.
 share a dream and help the blind to see.
 cher - ish life, to do the lov - ing deed.
 pow - ered us; we go in Je - sus' name.

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Music: CHESTERFIELD, attr. Thomas Haweis, 1734–1820

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DISMISSAL

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

“Let us exit to serve”

We are called to reach up, reach in, and reach out.....

IF YOU HAVE ANYONE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD TO THE PRAYER LIST, PLEASE CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE @ 302-658-5288. NAMES WILL REMAIN ON THE PRAYER LIST FOR 3 MONTHS, UNLESS YOU REQUEST LONGER. PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE to MAKE ADDITIONS – (302) 658-5288.

THIS WEEK WE ASK THAT YOU KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:

UNITY CHURCH	PASTOR BRIAN SANDERS
HARRY WILLIAMS	PASTOR CLARENCE PETTIT
REV. LORRAINE	RUTH JOE
FRAN RODRIQUEZ	CAROL EGAN
JOAN MILLER	AL SHOLLENBERGER
JAMES SPAMER	HARRY WILLIAMS
ROBERT OLIVER	TANYA BIRCH
DONA RODRIGUES AND SON DANIEL	
ALICE COLEMAN	MICHAEL JACKSON
CURTIS & MICHELE JACKSON	
MARY ELLEN BANE	CLAIRE GARNETT
ARIELLE KEYSER	

ANNOUNCEMENTS – Birthdays, Anniversaries, Visitors
WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME ALL VISITORS TO UNITY THIS MORNING.
IT IS SO GOOD TO HAVE YOU AND PLEASE COME AGAIN.

PUB THEOLOGY – is held on the third Sunday of each month. We meet in the Weiser Room and hold a lively discussion centering around everyday life. It is quite interesting and everyone is invited is invited

to attend. In October, we will meet on Sunday, 18th, immediately following morning worship. Please join us!

ZUMBA CLASSES will be held at 9:15am for ½ hour on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays of each month. This is a fun way to get in some exercise. All are invited to attend.

EVANGELISM COMMITTEE will meet again on Sunday, September 27, 2026, immediately following morning worship in the Weiser Room.

WORSHIP & MUSIC COMMITTEE will meet on Sunday, October 4th, immediately following morning worship in the Weiser Room.

FALL GIVEAWAY will be held in October 3rd. Please bring in any donated items for this event and leave them by the church office door. We will accept small household items, kitchen items, toys, games, bikes, clothing, shoes, jewelry, baby things, and other suitable items. Please leave all items in the Narthex or call Joan Lygate @ (302)563-6464 with questions or help for pick up. **All during this upcoming week, we will be separating and organizing our donations. We could use as much help as you can possibly spare. Please come and pitch in. We will be here every day starting at 8:00am.**

WE HAVE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY to see the performance "Joshua" in Lancaster on Wednesday, October 14th. The cost for transportation and ticket to the show will be \$154. Show time is 11:00 am. Terry Hawkins is in charge and would like to know as soon as possible how many will be going. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Terry. **SOLD OUT!!!!**

LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY has invited us all to their LCM Fall Fundraiser. It will be held on Saturday, October 17 starting at 2:00pm. See attached flyer outlining the details.

ST PHILIP'S LUTHERAN CHURCH is holding their 2026 Fall Women's Retreat on Saturday, November 7th 8:30am-1:00pm including lunch. The theme is "Angels – Messengers of Love". We are all invited. Please see attached flyer for more details.

SUNDAY COFFEE HOUR/FELLOWSHIP will resume regular activity on November 1st. In the interim, feel free to bring any contributions, along with utensils needed. Then please stay to take home leftovers and any utensils brought. If anyone is interested in hosting after November 1st, please contact Rev. Lorraine @ (302) 383-9755.

PRIVATE PRAYERS – If you would like extra prayer time, you are welcome to stay at the altar after you have had communion.

Dementia Caregiver Support Group: 2nd Thursday of the month, 6-7:30pm. Contact Rev. Brain Sanders for more info.

REV. LORRAINE has been appointed by Council to oversee any rentals of our building. If you or anyone you know might be interested in renting space in our building, please contact Rev. Lorraine at (302) 383-9755 (cell) via text and/or email: evangelldryden@yahoo.com.

Prayer: Anyone interested in 30 minutes of presenting prayer leads is invited to join our Prayer Line every Monday evening at 6:30-7:00 pm. Dial 1-240-591-0390, 315-704#.

Volunteers needed: Readers (lectors), Assisting Ministers (Worship leaders), Communion Assistants and Altar Guild. Please consider helping out in this capacity. Also, we need a volunteer liaison for the Boy Scouts to replace Bob Mazzoni. See Carol Egan for more info.

Council Vacancies: There are several open positions on Unity Church Council – volunteers needed to oversee Education, Hospitality, and Stewardship Committees; as well as anyone with accounting or bookkeeping skills to assist the Treasurer. See Rob Snowden or Pastor Sanders.

Offering/Giving: An alternative way to contribute to Unity is to set up VANCO on your mobile phone by texting (844)794-0738 and follow directions to donate by credit card. There is a “donate now” button on our Website which is www.unitywilmington.org

Spiritual Direction/Companionship: If you'd like to talk individually about your faith life and how God shows up for you, contact Pr. Melissa. Sessions are free for Unity members (normally \$50 per hour). Companions usually meet once a month.

Bible Study will resume on Wednesday evening, September 16, 2026. It will be held every Wednesday evening at 7:00 via Zoom. Please access Zoom as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87206052414?pwd=cWxnSnJodFE5S3hObzQrVGdMWGwwUT09>

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,87206052414#.....0#,,717690# US (Wash, DC)

Meeting ID: 872 0605 2414

Passcode: 717690