

The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Sunday, August 30, 2026  
9:30 a.m. Worship



**“Truly, I say to you,  
there are some standing here  
who will not taste death  
until they see the  
Son of Man  
coming in  
his kingdom.”**

*Matthew 16:28, ESV*

*“Be and Make Disciples of Jesus Christ”*

Grace Lutheran Church

111 Lutheran Drive, P.O. Box 86, Eaton, Ohio 45320

937.456.6258

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Website: [www.gracelutheranofeaton.com](http://www.gracelutheranofeaton.com)

Pastor Dwight Hanson

## WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

Please take a moment this morning to fill out the “Attendance & Communion” Registration Cards in the pew rack in front of you then place the completed card at the end of the pew.

P - Presiding Minister

A - Assisting Minister

C - Congregation

\* - PLEASE STAND

+ + +

### PRELUDE

### \*WORDS OF WELCOME

### \*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen.**

P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

***Please kneel or sit as you are able.***

P Most merciful God,

C **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

P Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen**

**\*SHARING OF GOD’S PEACE:**

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

**\*GATHERING HYMN: “*Word of God, Come Down on Earth*” (WOV 716)**

**\*GREETING:**

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

**\*PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

P Let us pray: Holy God, strengthen us to follow your commands in humble obedience along life’s journey. Show us the way of sacrificial love for the sake of your world as we lose our old lives and find true life in Christ;

C **through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**FIRST LESSON: Jeremiah 15:15-21**

A A reading from Jeremiah:

<sup>15</sup>O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach. <sup>16</sup>Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. <sup>17</sup>I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation. <sup>18</sup>Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail? <sup>19</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD: “If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you

utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them. <sup>20</sup>And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, declares the LORD. <sup>21</sup>I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.”

A The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM 26

A <sup>1</sup>Give judgment for me, O LORD, for I have lived with integrity; I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.

C **<sup>2</sup>Test me, O LORD, and try me; examine my heart and my mind.**

A <sup>3</sup>For your love is before my eyes; I have walked faithfully with you.

C **<sup>4</sup>I have not sat with the worthless, nor do I consort with the deceitful.**

A <sup>5</sup>I have hated the company of evildoers; I will not sit down with the wicked.

C **<sup>6</sup>I will wash my hands in innocence, O LORD, that I may go in procession round your altar,**

A <sup>7</sup>Singing aloud a song of thanksgiving and recounting all your wonderful deeds.

C **<sup>8</sup>LORD, I love the house in which you dwell and the place where your glory abides.**

A <sup>9</sup>Do not sweep me away with sinners, nor my life with those who thirst for blood,

C **<sup>10</sup>Whose hands are full of evil plots, and their right hand full of bribes.**

A <sup>11</sup>As for me, I will live with integrity; redeem me, O LORD, and have pity on me.

C **<sup>12</sup>My foot stands on level ground; in the full assembly I will bless the LORD.**

### SECOND READING: Romans 12:9-21

A A reading from Romans:

<sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the LORD.” <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**A** The Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

**\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:**

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

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

**\*GOSPEL: Matthew 16:21-28**

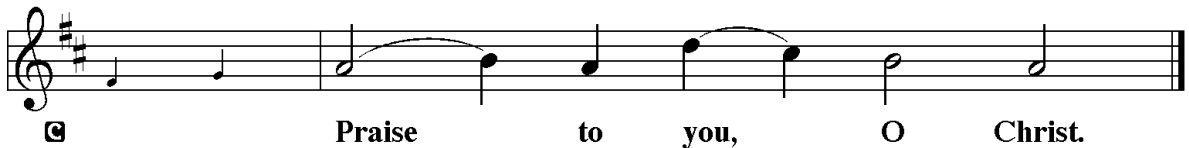
**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Sixteenth Chapter.

Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

<sup>21</sup>Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the

third day be raised. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” <sup>23</sup>But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” <sup>24</sup>Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? <sup>27</sup>For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. <sup>28</sup>Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

P The Gospel of the Lord.



## CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

**SERMON: Pastor Dwight Hanson — Follow the Leader**

(Find Sermon at the end of the bulletin)

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY:**                    *“The Old Rugged Cross”*                    (TFF 77)

**\*APOSTLES’ CREED:**

**C I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.**  
**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He 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 and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He 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.**

**PRAYERS:**

A Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, inspire us to follow wherever you lead, even when we cannot see the way forward. Teach us the meaning of discipleship, dying to self-centered plans, rising up to a Christ-centered life. Unite us in faithfulness as followers of Jesus. And fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we know what it means to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Lord, in your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer.**

A We pray, oh Lord, for the needs of the world. Amid all the news headlines, we ask for your will to be done, for the presence of goodness to overcome evil. Draw near to all who have suffered from disasters. We thank you for the growing harvest, and ask your blessing on the fields, gardens and orchards, and on all the stewards who tend them. We pray for goodness in the civic realm, for our own nation's civil servants in all branches of government, that they would seek your will and the wisdom that blesses the people. We pray for all who serve with honor, keeping the peace in harm's way. Protect them and their families. Lord, in your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer.**

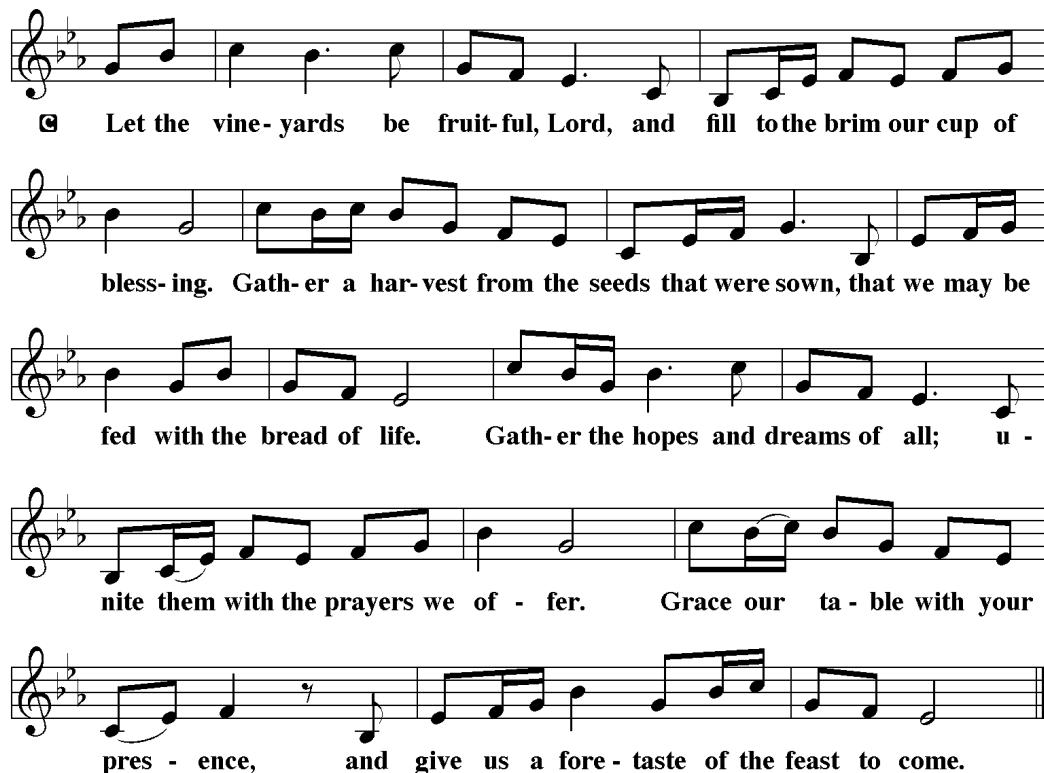
A And we pray for all who need healing in any way: *Jim Courtney, Tiffany Daugherty, Becky Haws, Amy, Bryan & Aprill Jackson, Mary Nossaman, Karen Schaeff, Freda & Ted Schmidt, Iva-Laura Sherry, Dean Shetter, Mike & Barb Studebaker, Wayne Williams*, as well as those whom we name silently in our hearts (pause for silent prayer). Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray.

**C Trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**OFFERING**

**SPECIAL MUSIC: "Strong" (Veronica Forney)**

**\*OFFERTORY: (LBW PG. 86) "Let the Vineyards"**



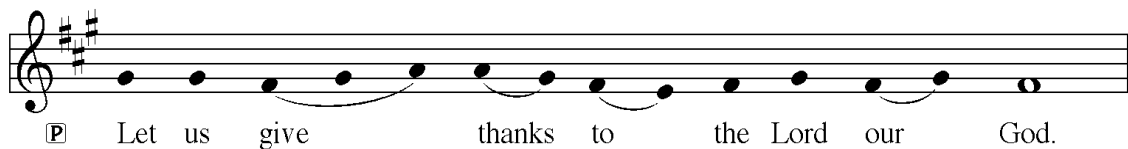
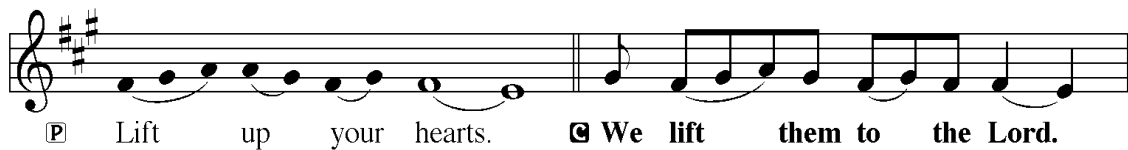
**G** Let the vine- yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
bless- ing. Gath- er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be  
fed with the bread of life. Gath- er the hopes and dreams of all; u -  
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your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

**\*OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

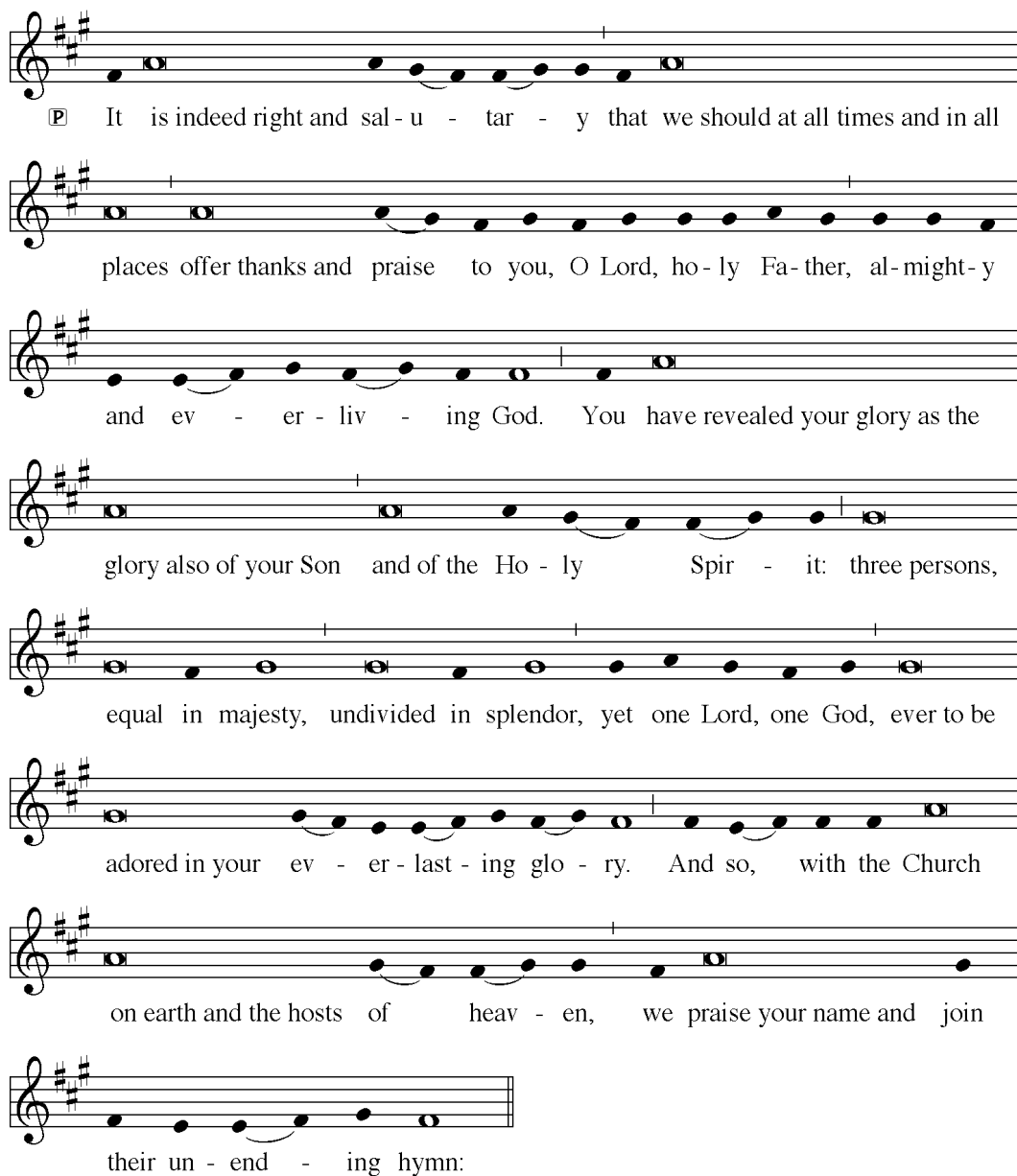
**P** Blessed are you,  
**C** **O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**



## \*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING:

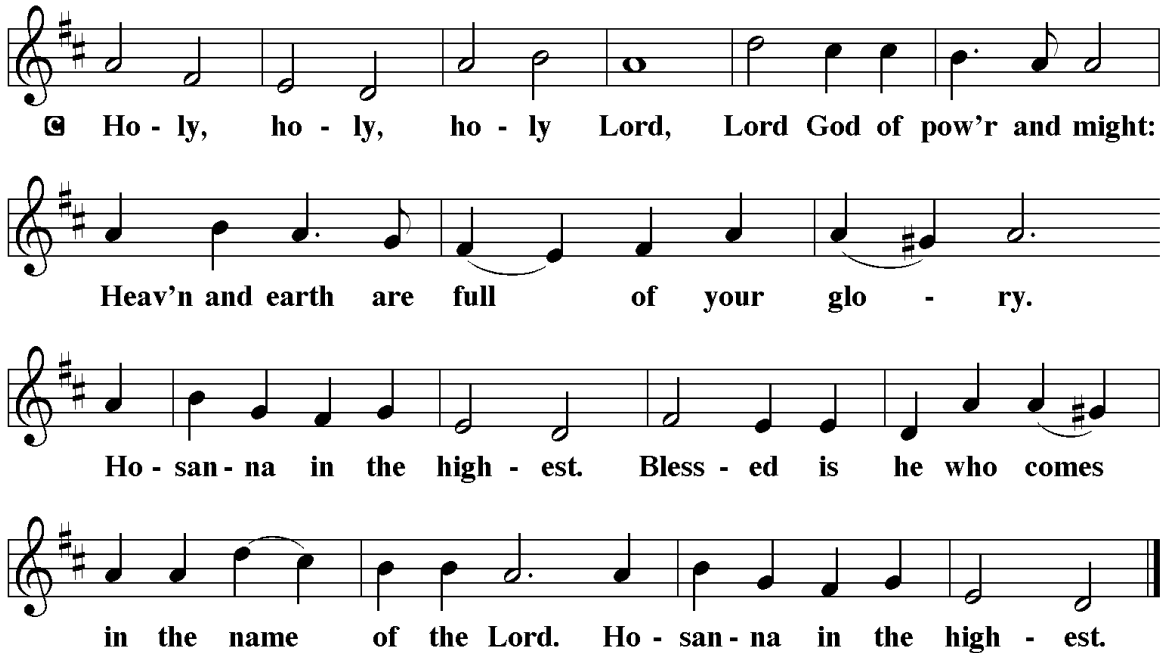


## \*THE PROPER PREFACE:



It is indeed right and sal - u - tar - y that we should at all times and in all  
places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, ho - ly Fa - ther, al - might - y  
and ev - er - liv - ing God. You have revealed your glory as the  
glory also of your Son and of the Ho - ly Spir - it: three persons,  
equal in majesty, undivided in splendor, yet one Lord, one God, ever to be  
adored in your ev - er - last - ing glo - ry. And so, with the Church  
on earth and the hosts of heav - en, we praise your name and join  
their un - end - ing hymn:

## \*SANCTUS:



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.

## \*THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION:

P 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:

**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.

## DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION AND BLESSING OF CHILDREN *Communion will be received continuously.*

*In Holy Communion our Lord Jesus graciously invites those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to repent of all that separates us from God, and to receive his sacred and real presence for the forgiveness of sins. In addition to wine, grape juice is also offered. Children who do not yet receive Communion may receive a blessing.*

### Regarding Healing Prayer

***After receiving Holy Communion, anyone who would like individual prayer for healing and anointing with oil is invited to approach Pastor in the Narthex.***

## COMMUNION HYMNS: “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.

***“Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup” (WOV 706)***

***“There is a Balm in Gilead” (WOV 737)***

***“You Satisfy the Hungry Heart” (WOV 711)***

**\*THE BLESSING:**

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C **Amen**

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER:**

P Let us pray. Pour out upon us the spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of those whom you have fed with one heavenly food; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen**

**\*BENEDICTION:**

P The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

C **Amen.**

**\*SENDING HYMN:           *“Lift High The Cross” (LBW 377)***

**\*DISMISSAL:**

P Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**

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# GRACE AT A GLANCE

## ***Grace Lutheran Church***

111 Lutheran Dr., P.O. Box 86 –

Eaton, OH 45320 Phone: 937-456-6258 Email: GraceEaton111@gmail.com

*www.gracelutheranofeaton.com ~ ~ Like us on Facebook*

### ***OFFICE HOURS:***

Monday -Friday: 10—1, 2—5

#### ***TODAY August 30, 2026— 14th Sunday after Pentecost***

9:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion & Healing Prayer

10:30 a.m. Fellowship & Adult Education — Lessons of the Day

#### ***Monday August 31***

Pastor's Day Off

9:45 a.m. Choose to Lose

#### ***Tuesday September 1, 2026***

10:00 a.m. Worship Committee

#### ***Wednesday September 2***

9:00 a.m. Bible Study

#### ***Thursday September 3***

7:00 p.m. AA Meeting

#### ***Friday September 4***

12:30 p.m. Bulletin Production

#### ***Saturday September 5***

7:30 a.m. Men of Grace (Bob Evan's)

### **UPCOMING WEEK SPECIAL EVENTS**

Sun 9/6—Fifteenth Sunday of Pentecost, Worship, Fellowship & Adult Education

Mon. 9/7—LABOR DAY—OFFICE CLOSED-- Pastor Off, Choose to Lose

Tues. 9/8—Mom's Bible Study,

Wed. 9/9--Bible Study, **Choir Resumes**

Thurs. 9/10—AA Meeting, Council Meeting & Exec. Committee

Fri. 9/11— Bulletin Production, Office closing early in the afternoon

Sat. 9/12—

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Join us on Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.** as Adult Church Choir Resumes in the Sanctuary. Our first Sunday to sing is Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. Check the September Grace Herald for additional choir information.



## **Campfires of Grace—Summer 2026:**

**When?** The third Wednesday of September: September 16th.

**What time?** 7:00 PM.

**For whom?** Everyone.

**Where?** By the campfire ring near the picnic shelter.

**What to bring?** Just yourself (and a friend, if you like), a lawn chair, and a heart that's ready to relax and enjoy an old-fashioned, outdoor tradition.



**The 2026-2027 Sunday School year gets underway on: Sunday September 13, 2026 with *RALLY SUNDAY!***

We'll have worship at 9:30 a.m.

Followed by Rally Day activities and a **family picnic sponsored by the Elders** (Menu: Fried Chicken & Homemade Ice Cream. Those attending are asked to bring side dishes).

***So that we can order the right amount of chicken, etc., please sign up in the Narthex.***



**September 20<sup>th</sup> is the FIRST DAY OF REGULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL.**

Classes begin after worship, starting around 10:30 a.m., and are held in the Education wing. We begin with live music and go to an adjacent Classroom for our lesson after that.



Parents or grandparents are always welcome to sit in on classes. Friends or drop-ins are welcome too!

# WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

**Altar Guild for August:** Janice & Gretchen Pearce

**Altar Guild for September:** Elaine Fudge

**Offering Counter for August:** Janice Barnes

**Offering Counter for September:** Patty Barnes

## Sunday, August 30—Pentecost 14-Healing Prayers

**9:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** Richard & Jane Coggin

**Usher:** Richard & Jane Coggin

**Lector:** Jane Coggin

**Communion:** Tiffany Ingram, Debbie McKinney,  
Patty Barnes

**Acolyte:** Jessa Barnes

## Sunday, September 6—Pentecost 15

**9:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** David & Wanda Winter

**Usher:** Clayton Kiracofe

**Lector:** Carol Perry

**Communion:** Jane Coggin, Janice Barnes

**Acolyte:** Sophia Steiner

## Sunday, September 13 – Pentecost 16—Rally Sunday

**9:30 a.m.**

**Greeter:** Tom & Patty Barnes

**Usher:** Gary Pemberton

**Lector:** Patty Barnes

**Acolyte:** Jessa Barnes

## Attendance & Stewardship — (\$4,187 needed wkly)

08/23/2026

80

\$3,074.00

## ***Great Commission Outreach Partners:***

*World Mission Prayer League—Chris & Emily and family, Lutheran Military Veterans and Families, Abundant Grace, West Chester*

***Grace Lutheran Mission Endowment Fund:*** The purpose of this fund is to extend the ministry of Grace Lutheran Church, apart from the general operation of the congregation. To learn more about our Mission Endowment Fund, please contact the church office and we'll give your question to the appropriate person.



## IN OUR PRAYERS

*After 4 weeks we will remove names from this list. If you would like to keep someone on the list, please note their name on the back of the “Attendance & Communion Registration” form.*

### **URGENT PRAYER LIST:**

#### **HEALING: (In Alphabetical Order)**

**Jim Courtney:** (Young father battling Stage 4 Melanoma)

**Tiffany Daugherty:** (Having tests)

**Becky Haws:** (Friend of Janet Burkett—Prayers for healing)

**Amy & Bryan Jackson:** (for comfort and healing)

**Mary Nossaman:** (Barb Myers’ sister—in the hospital with intestinal issues)

**Karen Schaeff:** (Recovering from surgery to repair broken clavicle)

**Freda & Ted Schmidt:** (Dean Shetter’s Parents – as they adapt to their new surroundings)

**Iva-Laura Sherry:** (Dealing with heart issues)

**Mike & Barb Studebaker:** (Mike: dealing with health issues; Barb: recovering from surgery for leg fracture).

**Wayne Williams:** (Nephew of Karen Schaeff & cousin of Adam – he is beginning radiation therapy for cancer)

**LONG-TERM PRAYER LIST:** Charlie, Tracy, Jim Carlisle, Claude Dixon, Dave O’Shea, George & Barb Suggs, Violet Forney, Mark & Jary Tannehill, Jackie Steiner, Connie Martin, Maggie Risko, Rhonda Paige Atkinson, Amy & Bryan Jackson, Andy Proeschel, Judy Newkirk, Mike & Judy Schamel, Suzan Pauley, Carmen Hasdorff, Tom Schamel, Amanda & Shayla Dell, Fran Kester, Teddi & Mike Watkins, Jenifer Combs, Doug Davis, Pastor Dean & Sandy Haferman, Dave Brumbaugh, Scot Emig, Barbara Worley, Carolyn MacFadyen, Judy Jay, Will Suggs, Earl House, Barbara Lakes, Becky Hoskins, Kayli Johnson, Joe McHenry, Tom Barnes: and those serving in the military: Maj. Love Hartman; Brad Newkirk; Lt. Col. Kyle Hundley, Travis Deck & family

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY:

## Fellowship & Education

**Following Worship—Refreshments** for all are served in the Fellowship Hall immediately following worship on Sundays.

- **Youth Sunday School classes** meet @ **10:30 a.m.** — Classes will resume the Sunday after RALLY DAY (9/13) in the Sunday School music room (Education wing) and start with songs and prayer, then go to the adjacent classroom for our lesson. Bring a friend! Parents are always welcome.
- **Adult Education**— Following 9:30 a.m. worship, the adults meet to discuss the lessons of the day unless there is a theme. Coffee and snacks provided.
- **Every other Sunday— Sunday S'mores @ 6:00 p.m.** —**They will resume on Sunday, 9/13 at 6:00 p.m.** A Middle School & High School-aged Youth Sunday Evening Ministry. Friends are welcome. Tina Ebright is the moderator, and she can be reached at 937-472-5663.

### **Adult Bible Studies (during the week)**

- **The 2nd Monday of each Month — 6:30 p.m.—The Phoebe Women's Bible Study.** In September they will resume the study — **Discerning the Voice of God** by Priscilla Shirer. Contact Kelly Mt. Castle (937-336-1223 or [kelly.mtcastle@gmail.com](mailto:kelly.mtcastle@gmail.com)).
- **The 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the Month:**
  - \* **6:00 p.m. — Wine & The Word** — this group shares a light meal (at the home of Carol Perry). **They are taking a break for the summer** and plan to resume in the fall. If you would like to join them, please contact Carol at 937-456-6683 or [cbperry122@embarqmail.com](mailto:cbperry122@embarqmail.com)
- **The 2nd Tues. of each month — 5:30 p.m. — FOR MOMS . . .** They are doing a study called **Boundaries** .
- **The Wednesday Morning Prayer & Bible Study — 9:00 a.m.** — meets in the Meeting Room adjacent to the Fellowship Hall. They are studying the **New Testament and the Gospel of Matthew.**
- **The 3rd Thursday of each month — 2:00-4:00 p.m. — “Graceful Fiber Guild”** — **meets** in the Fellowship Hall or the adjacent meeting room. Bring a craft you've been working on or just come to learn a new craft. Everyone is welcome to join us! Our next meeting is ***Thurs., September 17th.***

**These studies are open to any member and our friends. No prior Bible study background is needed. Please bring your Bible.**

## COMING IN SEPTEMBER

### Grace Lutheran Sunday School Fall Schedule

*Mark your calendars now! Friends or drop ins welcome!*

Fall Sunday School Special Events for kids:

|                      |                                                |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>September 13:</b> | <b>* Rally Sunday</b>                          |
| <b>September 20:</b> | <b>** Regular classes begin</b>                |
| <b>October 18:</b>   | <b>Pumpkin Patch Festival</b>                  |
| <b>November 8:</b>   | <b>Thankful Breakfast/Pageant Practice</b>     |
| <b>November 29:</b>  | <b>No Sunday School (Thanksgiving weekend)</b> |

**Worship Service at 9:30 a.m.**

**Youth Sunday School every Sunday (10:30-11:15 a.m.)**

**Questions? Call the church office (937) 456-6258**

**\*Rally Day is 9/13 with food and activities for all ages.**

**\*\*Regular Sunday School begins on 9/20. Classes are after worship, starting around 10:30 a.m., and are held in the Education wing. We begin with live music and go to an adjacent classroom for our lesson after that. Parents or grandparents are always welcome to sit in on classes. Friends or drop-ins are welcome too!**



### Sunday S'mores for Middle & High-Schoolers

Returns on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

We'll meet at the fire ring. Bring a friend!

## Take Up Your Cross

Find the 39 **bold** words from Matthew 16:21-28 (ESV)

U D U F M F X T K S N V C S E  
I L N J O I A K A R S O M A S  
W O R L D R H T U K M O C V N  
E N O Y N A F T H I E H R E I  
X G X D T S E E N E D I T C A  
P E N I F R E G I C R M I N G  
D I S C I P L E S T K S F O R  
F M A N W O U L S I S E O S E  
S U S E J O V G N O L L R P P  
A N G E L S L G L O L F P E A  
E T S A T H D L H O T L L R Y  
D E N Y D O T W O R R L I S E  
S O U L M Z J A U F I Y T O K  
V J O L L I W L E F V G N N A  
C T E L S M Y Q E D C X U W S

Then Jesus told his **disciples**, “If **anyone** would come after me, let him **deny himself** and **take up his cross** and **follow** me. For whoever would **save his life will lose** it, but whoever loses his life for my **sake** will **find** it. For what will it **profit** a man if he **gains the whole world** and **forfeits his soul**? Or what shall a man give in **return** for his soul? For the **Son of Man** is going to come with his **angels** in the **glory** of his **Father**, and then he will **repay each person** according to what he has done. **Truly**, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not **taste death** until they see the Son of Man **coming in his kingdom**.”

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14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, 8/30/2026; Grace Lutheran Church; Pastor Dwight Hanson

Jeremiah 15:15-21, Psalm 26; Romans 12:9-21, Mt 16:21-28

Children's message: We just heard in the Bible that the Prophet Jeremiah was having a bad day. At times, life may not be easy. What do we do when things are hard—quit, fuss, throw a tantrum? Jeremiah sort of did that in today's reading. Do you think that God calmed him down by giving him everything he wanted? No. The Lord promised that He would be *with* Jeremiah (15:20). We have the same promise because of *Jesus*. He leads. We follow. Let's pray...

### **Follow the Leader**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. You heard the first lesson, where Jeremiah came face to face with an unpleasant mystery. Why, if he had been faithful to God, was he suffering so badly? Why was he lonely and misunderstood? Jeremiah prayed, waited, wondered, and even lashed out. Yet God *was* there. It's just that Jeremiah lived in a difficult time. God's presence meant that the prophet would be given the strength to remain faithful, not that he would have it easy. He'd be given the words that a wayward people *needed*, regardless of what they may have *wanted* to hear, which was, in fact, the problem!

Turn to the Gospel for today: Peter was also confronted by an unpleasant mystery. Still basking in the glow of being called the “rock” upon which the Church would be built, he suddenly became a stumbling stone. It's true that Peter had correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah. But what did it mean?

The Lord began talking about his impending *suffering* and *death* in Jerusalem. No disciple would have wanted to hear such words. Furthermore, why on earth would the Lord knowingly do this? As everyone knew, the Messiah, like the cavalry, would come riding in to *save* the day, not *lose* it. How could he save the day by being rejected, perishing on a Roman cross? Peter had heard

enough. He stepped into the path and spoke that fateful word, “*never!*” The rock felt that he must become a boulder to block the pass.

Both Peter and Jeremiah were told that they did not understand the plan of God. Both were told to fall in line behind God, not try to order things they couldn’t comprehend. Something tells me that there just might be a subtle message for all of us in these readings for today.

One of my seminary classes was called “Theology of the Cross.” It was about struggling with the uncomfortable mysteries of our faith, where seemingly incompatible words are closely linked. This is an understanding of Christianity that deals with people in real life, as moments of joy and blessing get mixed right in with times of trouble, including the stark realization of mortality and the true nature and depth of sin. In this world we’re always tempted to try to save our own lives—however we define it, and whatever it takes. Yet, as children of the Heavenly Father, we’re called to listen more closely to the Word, seeking the will of God, whatever that means in any given situation, even the most challenging.

One of the books recommended for that theology class was called Young Men and Fire. Seeing all the recent footage of the fires out west reminded me of the book, which chronicles a tragedy, where several young men were told to follow their leader in an incomprehensible situation, one where their very lives depended on their response.

The author was Norman Maclean, who grew up in Montana and had also written the book A River Runs Through It. Here’s a summary of Young Men and Fire: "On August 5, 1949, a crew of fifteen of the U. S. Forest Service's elite airborne firefighters, the Smokejumpers, stepped into the sky above a remote forest fire in the Montana wilderness. Less than an hour after their jump, all but three of these men were...mortally burned. Haunted by these deaths for forty years, Norman Maclean puts back together the scattered pieces of the Mann Gulch tragedy."

Maclean, a retired English professor, left all the regular comforts behind in order to climb through the rugged terrain he had known so well in his youth. Did it look the same, or different, after all that time? Also, he was haunted by more than just that one historic inferno. He had recently walked beside his wife until death parted them. As he drew near to the end of his life, he was wrestling with

ultimate matters of identity and mortality. So, he poured everything into an investigation of a tragedy that had happened decades prior. Perhaps he could put together the pieces of just that one mysterious puzzle.

Mann Gulch was rugged, steep and dry. Add some tall dead grass, strong winds, and fire, and it was no place you wanted to be. But that was their task. The smokejumpers, dropped in by parachute to control the blaze, were led by their trustworthy foreman named Dodge.

As it can happen in both nature and life, the wind quickly changed direction, meaning that the fire, which the men thought was safely at a distance, started racing up the gulch toward them. The only option they had was to move quickly in the opposite direction, which they did, uphill, through treacherous terrain the whole way. It was a race that 12 of the 15 would lose.

When they were about 200 yards from the top of the ridge, Foreman Dodge looked back at the fire and estimated that in less than a minute it would catch them. No way they could cover that steep ground in such a short time. So, he did something that had the rest of the crew questioning his sanity. He stopped and turned to face the roaring fire, then bent down in the dry grass and lit a fire of his own. If that behavior wasn't strange enough, one of the survivors reported that he saw their foreman enter his own fire and lie down in its hot ashes (p. 75).

Was this not the very thing they were fleeing? And yet, since he had already burned the small area around him, the pursuing fire simply had no fuel in that spot. For a brief moment, the raging inferno split and went around him. Precisely by facing and plunging-in, he did not lose his life.

In the aftermath, during the investigation hearings, Dodge told the officials that he stood there shouting for his men to follow him into his fire, where they might be safe. After all, he was their *leader* and he had a *plan*. But no one followed him. Everyone knows that if you're trying to avoid trouble you don't go directly into the center of it. Those smokejumpers knew it. We know it. Peter knew it, as well.

*"Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (16:21).* Jesus, the trustworthy leader, had a plan. But Peter *"took him aside and began*

*to rebuke him... ‘This shall never happen to you’” (16:22). Throwing away one’s life was foolish at best. It simply could not be allowed! To Peter, this was a clear case of justified mutiny. By the way, how many of our recurring problems in life originate from something like self-justified mutiny, in the assumption that we know better than the Almighty?*

*Jesus turned to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God...” (16:23). “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (16:24-25).*

Worldly logic would not help Peter in this moment. Only faith. Here is the humility to accept that we don’t get to have all the answers to all the questions when we want them. The relationship of faith between a person and God is not like some mathematical equation. It’s more like a matter of the heart, a kind of living *trust* that’s beyond our ability to grasp. In fact, it’s less like holding and more like being held.

Speaking of which...Norman Maclean didn’t finish his book. He didn’t get all the pieces of the puzzle neatly together. The people at the Univ. of Chicago Press didn’t really finish it, either. They simply took his notes, tried to assemble them as best they could, and published what was there. Do we, as human beings, write the endings, or for that matter, the beginnings?

Isn’t that the whole point coming through today? We cannot stand *in front* of Jesus and direct him. Trying to see into the deepest mystery of this life, particularly suffering and redemption, is like looking through thick smoke, or into a mirror, dimly. Never mind trying to control it. One cannot always explain the many minor crosses we’re called to carry, serving others for God’s purposes beyond the self’s immediate comprehension. We simply follow him who carried THE ULTIMATE CROSS, for us.

While we follow, the Holy Spirit deepens the faith that responded in the first place, which was also a gift of the Spirit. Traveling together, our hearts find faithful companionship and rest, just enough for this day, to be followed by enough for the next, each in turn. Our minds wrestle with the deep questions



throughout our lives. And our hands are put to good use, offering assistance where needed.

There is mystery to life, death, and new life. Our task, in the face of all this, is to take our place humbly *behind our Lord* as he leads the way. Only God knows how all

the pieces of the puzzle fit. Only God can truly finish life's work, which is precisely what he promises to do. Thanks be to God. Amen.