
THIS WEEK'S NEWS

St. Paul's United Church of Christ Somerset, PA Sunday, September 20, 2026

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here!

Our Ministry Team

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Rev. J. Matthew Deal: *Pastor*

Amanda Deal: *Director of
Children & Youth Ministries*

Dave Neimiller: *Organist
& Director of Music*

Marcy Shellenberger-Steinly:
*Children's and Youth Choir
Director*

Todd Wetzel: *Church
Council President*

Melanie Downing: *Church
Council Vice President*

Andra Snyder: *Secretary*

Jonathan Hillegas: *Treasurer*

Adam Shaffer & Diana Laue:
Trustees

Church Office: 814-445-4534

Dear St. Paul's Friends and Family,

*"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."
(Matthew 20:16)*

Jesus' parable of the laborers in the vineyard is likely one of his most controversial parables for our own time. He told his disciples about a landowner who hired laborers to work in his vineyard. The landowner went to the town square to hire workers five times, at daybreak, 9am, noon, 3pm, and 5pm. He promised the first group he hired a day's wage (one denarii) and to the others he'd pay them "what is right." The twist in the parable was that when it was time to pay the workers, the landowner paid the ones who were hired last first and he paid all the laborers a full day's wage. When the laborers who were hired first raised their voice in protest of this unexpected equalization, the landowner rebuked them for being jealous and reaffirmed his prerogative to do what he chose with his money. The master of the vineyard had remained true to his agreement to pay the day-

long workers what was agreed upon while also paying the others what he saw as right.

You really can't blame those who labored all day for being upset. Fair pay for fair work has been instilled in many of us. However, if you put yourselves in the sandals of the workers who were hired at the end of the day, this unexpected display of generosity is quite a gift. I have often wondered what the laborers who were hired at the end of the day were like as opposed to their earlier hired peers. The vineyard owner asks them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" Their response was that no one had hired them. Why hadn't they been hired earlier? Were some of them elderly or children, crippled or disabled, or maybe just unwanted or undesirable?

Jesus told parables to get us to think about the Kingdom of God. This parable gives us a lot to think about. God's economics are not the world's economics, nor is God's currency dollars and cents. The vineyard is not just a vineyard any more than the town's marketplace is just a place for commerce. The location is the Kingdom of God, and the currency is God's provision: love, grace, healing, and inclusion in God's community. The laborers aren't simply workers hired to do a job for pay, but rather, God's beloved who are sheltered from the dehumanizing forces of exploitation and death. They become a new creation within the Body of Christ.

This parable teaches us that it's God's will and desire to include as many people as possible in Christ's wholeness-making, live-giving work. The benefits of Christ's abundant life are for everyone regardless of one's faith, ability, or position in life. In God's house we are measured by our need for love and healing, not for what we can do for God or if we can prove we are sufficiently faithful.

We are participants in the Body of Christ. Just as we receive Christ's gifts, we are invited to share his love, compassion, and acceptance with others. May the Holy Spirit guide you and me as we labor together in God's vineyard.

Blessings for your journey,
Pastor Matt

Here are our worship opportunities for this weekend:

Sunday Worship in the Sanctuary and on Facebook and YouTube: 9:30am

The Order of Worship for Sunday, September 20, 2026—The 17th Sunday after Pentecost

Prelude

*Call To Worship (*Inspired by Psalm 145:1-8*)

Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

Leader: Bless the name of the Holy and Sovereign One forever and ever!

All: Great is our God and greatly to be praised.

L: Bless the name of the Holy and Sovereign One forever and ever!

All: This generation will tell the next generation so they may tell the next generation of the Holy One's magnificent and mighty acts.

L: Bless the name of the Holy and Sovereign One forever and ever!

All: We declare the abundant goodness, gracious righteousness, and holy love of our God. Praise the Holy One.

*Opening Hymn

"When Morning Gilds the Skies"

100

*Greeting

Call to Confession

Rev. J. Matthew Deal

L: Just as God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God also saves us from being enslaved by the harmful results of our sins and failures.

All: Let us offer our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay

God of abundance, forgive us for embracing a worldview that capitalizes on scarcity. Help us to know that you have given us enough for our journey. You have created us wonderfully and uniquely. Forgive us for comparing ourselves with our neighbor when we are called to love them. Help us to embrace how you have made us as individuals who may bring our singular gifts to our common life. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

a time for personal reflection and confession

Kyrie

The Kyrie is written for two staves in 4/4 time. The first staff is for the Leader and the second for the Congregation. The lyrics are: Leader: Lord have mer - cy. Lord have mer - cy. Christ have mer - cy. Congregation: Christ have mer - cy. Lord have mer - cy on us. Lord have mer - cy on us.

Words of Assurance

Rev. J. Matthew Deal

L: Beloved, you are enough. God loves you as you are for who you are. We, collectively, have enough and may share in a common life where all may flourish and live in harmony as our Creator intended and designed. You are forgiven and free to embrace the life that is uniquely yours.

All: Thanks be to God! Amen!

Passing of the Peace

L: May the Peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Special Music

"Make Me A Channel of Your Peace"

arr. J. Holstein

A Time for Children

*Hymn of Praise

"For the Fruits of All Creation"

714

Today's Scripture Lesson

Matthew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then

going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Sermon

"Infuriating Generosity"

Pastoral Prayer

Prayer Response



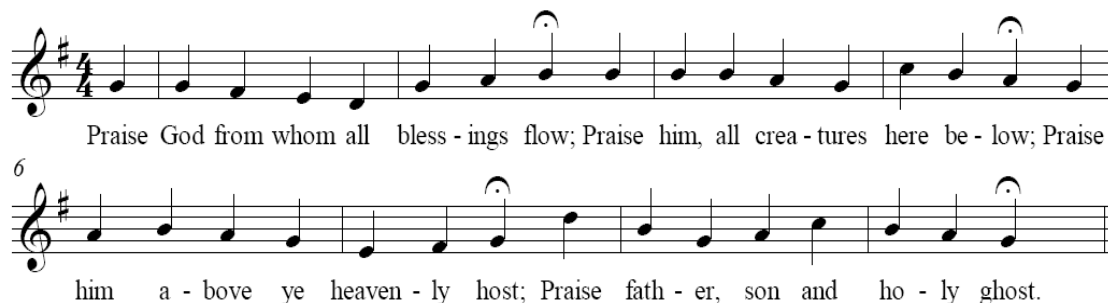
Come - and fill all my life, come - and fill all - my life.

Each and ev - ry ten - der place: Ho - ly Breath, move through me.
 Pour - ing gen - tly, rush - ing strong: Ho - ly Breath, move through me.

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory

*The Doxology



Praise God from whom all bless - ings flow; Praise him, all crea - tures here be - low; Praise

6 him a - bove ye heaven - ly host; Praise fath - er, son and ho - ly ghost.

*Prayer of Dedication

Rev. J. Matthew Deal

Ever-present and loving God, your Word tells us to cast our cares on you because you care for us. In faith and trust we present these gifts, and ourselves, to you. Bless and multiply them to meet the needs, both hidden and apparent, of your beloved ones. Inspire each of us to live as Christ's witnesses, today and ever more. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

*Prayer of Our Savior

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

*Charge & Benediction

"Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit." And may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit remain with you forever. Amen.

Please note, we continue to accept offerings during our in-person services, USPS mailed in offerings and online with Tithe.ly. If you have any questions, please call the church at 814-445-4534.

Church Office Hours are Monday-Friday: 8:30am—3:00pm

If someone is not physically in the office when you stop by, Pastor Matt or Dave is likely somewhere else in the building.

Office Phone: 814-445-4534

Greeters and Ushers:

September 20	September 27	October 4 Communion	October 11
Raymond Toy* Missy Toy Gary Cameron Charles Toy	Melanie Downing* Wynne Sechler CJ Downing Henry Cook	Christy Fetterman* Roy Fetterman Trevor Fetterman Audrey Hay	Diana Laue* Mike Stutzman Suzy Housley Sally McClintock

* Chair

Nursery Volunteers:

September 20	Melanie & CJ Downing
September 27	Debi Weaver & Taylor Fetterman
October 4	Corey & Alice Whaley
October 11	Gretchen Pritts & Colton Dewitt



Weekly Bible Study: Please join us each Tuesday at 10am in Salem Chapel.

September's Mission Offering is The Good Samaritan Fund

The Good Samaritan Fund was established to respond with compassion to urgent needs in the Somerset community. Through this ministry, St. Paul's United Church of Christ may provide short-term assistance to individuals and families facing unexpected financial hardship or other immediate challenges.

Come on down to Connections Café!

Please join us every Sunday downstairs in the fellowship hall following worship to connect and catch up with others in our faith family and enjoy a snack & coffee. This has been a long-running, fun and meaningful ministry here, and we need your help to keep it going. Please consider hosting a Sunday, making baked goods/providing snacks, or giving a monetary donation (denote "Connections Café" on your envelope). **Hosts are still needed for the following Sundays:**

September 27, October 4, October 11, October 18, November 1, and

November 15. Supplies will be available in the church refrigerator and freezer, and assistance making the coffee is available. If you are willing to host an upcoming Sunday, please put your name on the scheduling display found in Fellowship Hall or speak with Andra Snyder (814-233-0642). Thank you!



Sunday School is back in session! Classes will meet following Connections Café, from ~10:45 to 11:45 each Sunday. The Adult Forum meets in Salem Chapel, and will be looking at the book, *100 Bible Verses that Made America: Defining Moments That Shaped Our Enduring Foundation of Faith* by Robert J. Morgan. The mixed grades class (grade 1 – grade 7) meets in the C.E. Room. The "Play & Pray" group (age 2 – Kindergarten) meets in the nursery for Bible activities and playtime. All are welcome to check out a class and join us!

Time to get BACK in the "SING" of Things!



The Children's and Youth Choirs will start a new choir season on Saturday, September 19th, from 9:30-10:00 (both groups TOGETHER as we begin the year) in the Salem Chapel (lower level of the church)! Young people Age 4 - High School are invited to participate!

The Chancel Choir will begin a new choral season on Sunday, September 20th, following Worship & Fellowship!

Please join us as we excitedly begin a new year of musical ministry!

"SING"-cerely, Dave & Marcy

Mark Your Calendars! ... the *Christmas Musical* will be presented on *December 19th and 20th* this year!