
THIS WEEK'S NEWS

St. Paul's United Church of Christ Somerset, PA Sunday, October 4, 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,

"Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom." (Matt. 21:43)

I have come to appreciate the opportunity to read, study, and interpret scripture. It's a rare privilege to join countless others who have engaged in studying these ancient texts over the years. There are few other ancient literary works that are so widely disseminated and read by so many people. Lest we take for granted this opportunity, we would do well to gently remind ourselves of this privilege, but also acknowledge the complexities of Biblical texts and the challenges that come with understanding them.

This week's gospel lesson presents us with some of those challenges. Jesus is rushing headlong into a conflict with the religious leaders of his day. Over the course of his brief 3-year ministry they have questioned his actions, teachings, and authority. Even great acts of compassion like healings, feeding the hungry, and including others in God's realm have drawn the ire of the religious leaders.

Jesus calls them out when he tells the parable of the vineyard and the wicked tenants (you can read the entire text below). The gist of it is that the tenants who have been hired to care for the vineyard were hoarding the harvest for themselves and not sharing the proceeds with the vineyard owner. To make matters worse, they abused the slaves that the master sent to collect his portion and eventually, they even killed the master's son who had been sent to reason with them.

Jesus compared the lawless tenants with the Jewish religious leaders. They had been charged with managing God's vineyard, the Jewish faith, and instead misused their power to enrich themselves while also marginalizing the poor and attacking critics. They had targeted the prophets and would successfully plot to kill Jesus. Through the parable, Jesus condemned them and predicted a day when their authority would be stripped away and they be banished from the vineyard, God's realm.

We could be pardoned for wondering, so what does this have to do with any of us today? Most of us aren't religious leaders. And for people like me, who are, it's a cautionary parable. Ancient stories like this one do speak profoundly to us in our own time. The all-inclusive love of God that we experience through Jesus' life not only includes us in God's vineyard, but also empowers us to welcome others into God's realm. Although you may not hold an official religious title, if you are a follower of Christ, you also are one of his representatives.

This is a responsibility that we shouldn't take for granted. The Christian church, much like any other religions, can be a pretty exclusive place, especially for those who don't fit into the readily accepted pigeonholes of society, culture, and polite religious company. Over the past few decades countless surveys that have measured how the church is viewed in society have backed up these anecdotes with statistics. The spiritual and psychological harm that can come from a congregation not modeling Christ's love and acceptance can really diminish a person's self-worth, not to mention drive them away from God.

It is up to us as workers in God's vineyard to carry Christ's love and compassion into the world. In so doing, we help to transform the world into a healing place where all of God's children can grow into their fullest self as they love God and their neighbor. May the Holy Spirit guide us in the important life-saving work as we do our best of model Christ's love and acceptance in our lives.

Blessings on 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, October 4, 2026—The 19th Sunday after Pentecost—World-wide Communion Sunday.

Prelude

*Call To Worship

Rev. Ruth Garwood

Leader: Around the world people gather to break bread and pour wine.

All: We gather with them in heart and mind.

L: Around the world the broken body is made whole.

All: As part of that body we join in its unity.

L: Around the world the Banquet of God is prepared for the table.

All: We, who share in the banquet, come eagerly to be fed.

L: Let us worship together, let us share God's bounty.

*Opening Hymn

"Rejoice, You Pure In Heart"

15

*Greeting

Call to Confession

Rev. J.M. Deal

L: Holy and gracious God, let us be open to your presence among your people, those gathered for worship, and all of your people, throughout your creation.

All: May we receive you fully and respond to you wholeheartedly.

L: Holy One, hear now our confession.

Prayer of Confession

Rev. Ruth Garwood

Gracious God, we too often focus on the differences among us, rather than celebrating what we share in common. Forgive us. Help us to remember we are siblings to all of humanity, each and all of us created in your image. When we choose conflict, redirect our thoughts and actions to your love and your call to love each other. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

a time for personal reflection and confession

Kyrie

Leader: Congregation: Leader:

Lord have mer - cy. Lord have mer - cy. Christ have mer - cy.

Congregation: Leader: Congregation:

Christ have mer - cy. Lord have mer - cy on us. Lord have mer - cy on us.

Words of Assurance

Rev. Ruth Garwood

L: As children of God, we are loved tenderly. God longs to bring us into God's embrace. By the life and love of Jesus, you are forgiven and free.

All: Thanks be to God!

Passing of the Peace

L: May the Peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

Chancel Choir Anthem

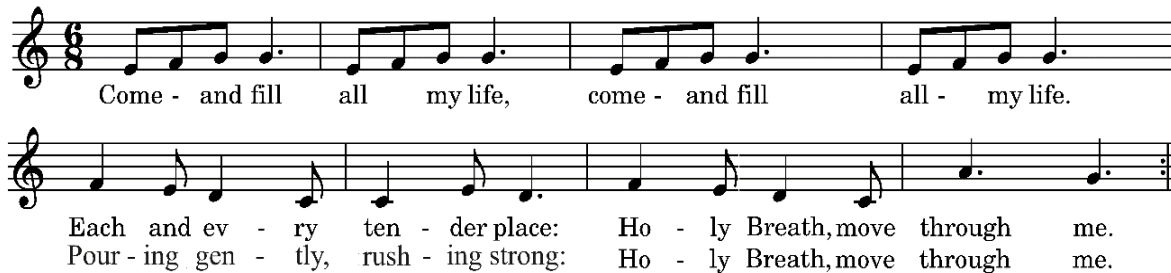
"Halle, Halle, Halle"

arr. H. Hopson

A Time for Children

Today's Scripture Lesson**Matthew 21:33-46**

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the LORD's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

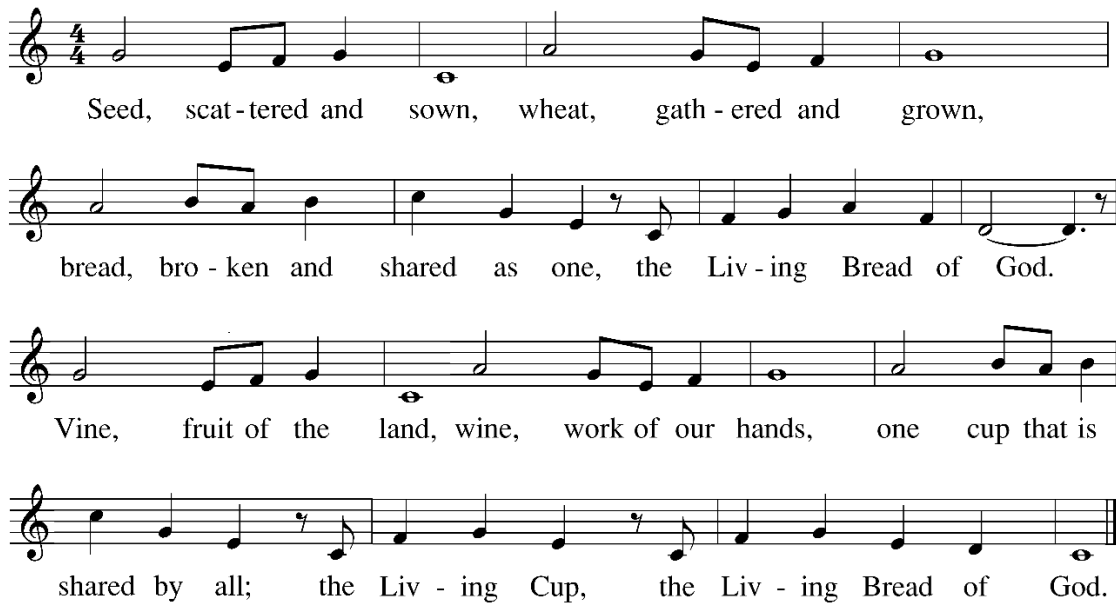
Sermon**"Your Place In the Vineyard"**Pastoral PrayerPrayer Response


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 OfferingOffertory

*The Offering Response



Seed, scat-tered and sown, wheat, gath-ered and grown,
bread, bro-ken and shared as one, the Liv-ing Bread of God.
Vine, fruit of the land, wine, work of our hands, one cup that is
shared by all; the Liv-ing Cup, the Liv-ing Bread of God.

*Prayer of Dedication

Rev. J. M. Deal

Ever-Living God, move us by your Spirit's presence. Shake us from our complacency. Awaken us from our spiritual slumber. Empower us by your Holy Spirit to give, body, mind, and soul to your service. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

The Liturgy of Holy Communion

*The Invitation

Pastor: Beloved in Christ, the Gospel tells us that on the first day of the week Jesus Christ was raised from death, appeared to Mary Magdalene, on that same day sat at the table with two disciples, and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

All: This is the joyful feast of the people of God. Men and women, youth and children, come from the east and the west, from the north and the south and gather at Christ's table.

P: This table is for all who wish to know the presence of Christ and to share in the community of God's people.

The Communion Prayer

P: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to God!

P: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise!

P: We give thanks, God of majesty and mercy, for calling forth the creation and raising us from dust by the breath of your being. We bless you for the beauty and bounty of the earth and for the vision of the day when sharing by all will mean scarcity for none. We remember the covenant you made with your people Israel, and we give you thanks for all our ancestors in faith. We rejoice that you call us to reconciliation with you and all people everywhere and that you remain faithful to your covenant, even when we are faithless. We rejoice that you call the entire human family to this table of sacrifice and victory. We come in remembrance and celebration of the

gift of Jesus Christ, whom you sent, in the fullness of time, to be the good news. Born of Mary, our sister in faith, Christ lived among us to reveal the mystery of your Word, to suffer and die on the cross for us, to be raised from death on the third day, and then to live in Glory! We bless you, gracious God, for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church you have gathered. With your sons and daughters of faith in all places and times, we praise you with joy.

Glastonbury Acclamations: (Call and Response)

P: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, and on the eve of death, Jesus gathered the disciples for the feast of the Passover.

Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this in remembrance of me."

Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of our faith.

All: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

P: Eternal God, we unite in this covenant of faith, recalling Christ's suffering and death, rejoicing in Christ's resurrection, and awaiting Christ's return in victory. We spread your table with these gifts of the earth of our labor. We present to you our very lives, committed to your service on behalf of all people. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit on this bread and wine, on our gifts, and on us. Strengthen your universal church that it may be the champion of peace and justice in all the world. Restore the earth with your grace that is able to make all things new.

All: Be present with us as we share this meal, and throughout our lives, that we may know you as the Holy One, who with Christ and the Holy Spirit, lives forever. Amen.

The Prayer of Our Savior (unison):

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.

The Breaking of Bread and Pouring Wine

P: The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. The cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.

The Call to Supper

P: The gifts of God for the people of God. Come, for all things are ready.

(**Please alert an usher if you need us to bring Communion to you or a gluten free wafer.)

The Sharing of the Elements

P: Take and eat, this is the body of Christ, broken for you.

All: Amen!

P: Take and drink, this is the cup of the new covenant, poured out for you.

All: Amen!

*The Prayer of Thanksgiving (unison)

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior's presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ's body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen

Closing Hymn

"How Firm a Foundation"

618

*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.

*Organ Interlude and Extinguishing of the Candles

Postlude

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:

October 4 Communion	October 11	October 18	October 25
Christy Fetterman* Roy Fetterman Trevor Fetterman Audrey Hay	Diana Laue* Mike Stutzman Suzy Housley Sally McClintock	Rich Nichols* Dale Snyder Rebecca Witt Kathy Gary	Andra Snyder* Sally McClintock Josh Boland Kirsten Thomas

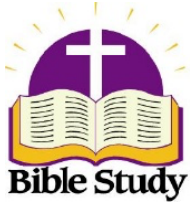
* Chair

Nursery Volunteers:

October 4	Corey & Alice Whaley
October 11	Gretchen Pritts & Colton Dewitt
October 18	Becky & Kendall Smith
October 25	Debi Weaver & Taylor Fetterman



Please join us this Sunday as we join millions of Christians around the world in celebrating *World-wide Communion Sunday!*



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

Neighbor's In Need is October's Mission Offering



Neighbors in Need Mission Moment

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul encourages the church to put on a new self and leave their old ways of being behind. This is at the heart of what he is teaching when he invites the Ephesians and all of us to “walk in love.”

Whether we walk, roll, or march in love, this is still an invitation for us today to continue to seek new ways of justice together. One of the ways we do this is by supporting the Neighbors in Need offering. When you give to Neighbors in Need, you support justice and advocacy ministries throughout the United Church of Christ. Whether through our partnership with the Council for American Indian Ministries or the Neighbors in Need grant program, your gifts equip ministries that seek to transform the world into a more just, fair, and equitable place.

We have hope that the world does not have to stay as it is, but we believe that God inspires transformative action. Whether through projects seeking to increase home ownership, providing food for unhoused siblings, or addressing mental health challenges of children and youth—we seek to make the world a more just place. The world can change and through the power of the Holy Spirit we can be a part of that transformation.

Together let us advocate, act, and give generously.

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). **October 18, November 8, November 15, and November 22.** 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!

Calling All Acolytes!

We need youth acolytes to light and extinguish the candles and the beginning and end of worship. Please put your name on the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway if you're interested in helping! Pastor Matt is available to instruct those who haven't done it before.

