



ST. STEPHEN'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF RIDGEFIELD

*Belonging
with purpose*

Our Mission: Embracing and living God's commandment to love our neighbors through worship, stewardship, and service to others.

The Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

October 25, 2026 • 10:00 A.M.

Prelude and Welcome

All stand and join in singing Hymn 379

1 God is Love, let heaven adore him;
God is Love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him
and exalt him with one voice.
God who laid the earth's foundation,
God who spread the heaven above,
God who breathes through all creation:
God is Love, eternal Love.

2 God is Love; and Love enfolds us,
all the world in one embrace:
with unfailing grasp God holds us,
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then we find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

3 God is Love; and though with blindness
sin afflicts all human life,
God's eternal loving-kindness
guides us through our earthly strife.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is Love, so Love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Celebrant Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.
Amen.

All join in The Collect for Purity

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires
known, and from you 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 Christ our Lord. Amen.

*As we sing, children are invited to follow
Storytime Leaders down to the Choir Room.*

Abbot's Leigh

All sing the Gloria in excelsis S-280

Robert Powell

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

All sit for **A Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul
to the Thessalonians**

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. *1 Thessalonians 2:1-8*

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 1 *sung by the choir*

- 1 Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, *
and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; *
and in his law will he exercise himself day and night.
- 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side, *
that will bring forth his fruit in due season.
- 4 His leaf also shall not wither; *
and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.
- 5 As for the ungodly, it is not so with them; *
but they are like the chaff,
which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth.
- 6 Therefore the ungodly shall not be able
to stand in the judgment, *
neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 7 But the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous; *
and the way of the ungodly shall perish

All stand and sing **Sequence Hymn 469**

St. Helena

- 1 There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice,
which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Savior;
there is healing in his blood.
- 2 There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven;
there is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgment given.
There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.
- 3 For the love of God is broader
than the measure of the mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful,
we should take him at his word;
and our life would be thanksgiving
for the goodness of the Lord.

Gospeller The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Matthew.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet'?"

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Matthew 22:33-46

Gospeller The Gospel of the Lord.

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Sermon The Rev'd Whitney F. Altopp, D.Min.

A moment for reflection follows the sermon.

All stand for **The Nicene Creed**

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

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

People O Lord of love,
hear our prayer.

All kneel for **The Confession of Sin**

Celebrant Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

People Most merciful God,
we confess that 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.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Celebrant Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The Peace

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

Offertory Sentence

Celebrant Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and make good thy vows unto the Most High.

Psalm 50:14

Offertory Anthem

Simon Lole

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. This is my commandment: that ye love one another, as I have loved you. God is Love, and those who live in love, live in God and God lives in them. If you keep my commandments, love one another, as I have loved you. Then your joy will be complete.

All stand for the **Presentation Hymn**

Old Hundredth

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him, all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

Book of Common Prayer p. 367

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People We lift them to the Lord.

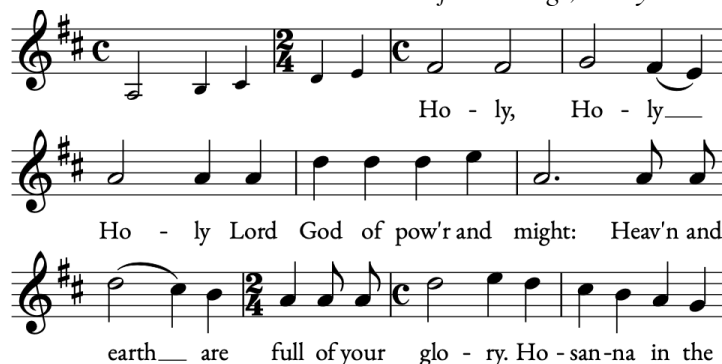
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. *The Celebrant prays a Proper Preface.* Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus

Mass of St. George, Barry Smith



high-est, in the high - est. Bless - ed is
He who comes in the name of the Lord: Ho
san - na in the high-est, in the high - est.

All stand or kneel as the Celebrant continues and ends with
Therefore, according to his command, O Father,
All We remember his death,
We proclaim his resurrection,
We await his coming in glory;

The Celebrant continues and ends with
And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we
are bold to say,

People 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, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant Alleluia: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.
People Therefore let us keep the feast: Alleluia.

Fraction Anthem *Mass of St. George, Barry Smith*

Je - sus, Lamb of God,
have mer - cy on us; Je - sus, bear-er of our sins,
have mer - cy on us. Je - sus, Re -
deem - er of the world, give us your peace.

Celebrant The Gifts of God for the people of God.

All join in singing **Communion Hymn** Richard Smallwood

Je - sus, you're the cen - ter of my joy; ———
all that's good and per - fect comes from you. ———
You're the heart of my con - tent - ment,
hope for all I do:
Je - sus, you're the cen - ter of my joy.

All kneel for the **Prayer After Communion**

Celebrant Let us pray.
All Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have
graciously accepted us as living members of your
Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us
with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body
and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace,
and grant us strength and courage to love and
serve you with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

The Priest pronounces God's blessing and all respond Amen.

All stand and sing **Hymn 657**

Hyfrydol

- 1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.
- 2 Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

3 Finish then thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Dismissal

Response **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Postlude

*The flowers on the altar are given
to the glory of God and in memory of*

Eva Landreth Collier

Claude Cox Collier

Louise Beucler Fitz Patrick

Francis Fitz Patrick

Robert Landreth Collier

Lulu C. Collier

Music Notes

God is Love, let heaven adore him establishes the theological foundation for the entire service: "God is Love." Written by Timothy Rees, a Welsh Anglican bishop, the text draws upon the First Letter of John (4:8, 16), extending God's love beyond the individual believer to embrace the whole of creation. Its assertion that human sorrow finds an echo "deep within the heart of God" presents a God who does not remain distant from suffering but enters into it. The hymn is sung to ABBOT'S LEIGH, composed in 1941 by Cyril Vincent Taylor while working for the BBC during the Second World War. Named for the village near Bristol where the BBC's religious broadcasting operations had been relocated, its broad melodic gestures and confident harmonies give musical expression to the hymn's expansive vision of divine love.

Psalm 1 introduces the Book of Psalms by contrasting two ways of life: the way of the righteous, rooted in God's law, and the way of the wicked, which ultimately leads to destruction. Its central image is a tree planted beside flowing water, flourishing because its roots draw upon a sustaining source. This suggests that righteousness is not merely outward obedience, but the fruit of a life nourished by continual attention to God's word. The psalm also illuminates today's Gospel: when Jesus identifies the greatest commandment, he reveals the law's deepest purpose—love of God and neighbor.

Frederick William Faber's **There's a wideness in God's mercy** is among the most eloquent expressions of divine compassion

in English hymnody. Faber, who began his ministry as an Anglican priest before entering the Roman Catholic Church, contrasts the narrowness of human judgment with the immeasurable breadth of God's mercy. The third stanza declares, "For the love of God is broader than the measure of the mind," reminding us that divine generosity exceeds our expectations and prejudices. Sung to ST. HELENA by American organist and composer Calvin Hampton (1938–1984), the hymn prepares us for Jesus' commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves: the mercy we receive must become the mercy we extend to others.

The Offertory Anthem, **As the Father has loved me**, by English composer and organist Simon Lole (b. 1957), draws principally upon the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel and the First Letter of John. Its text presents the commandment to love one another not merely as a moral obligation, but as participation in the love flowing from the Father through the Son to the community of believers. Lole, whose career has included service at Salisbury Cathedral, writes within the rich tradition of English sacred choral music. The anthem's message resonates with today's reading from First Thessalonians, in which Paul describes sharing not only the Gospel but his very self with those entrusted to his care.

Our Communion Hymn, **Jesus, You're the Center of My Joy**, was written by the American gospel composer and pianist Richard Smallwood (b. 1948), whose music bridges the traditions of African American gospel and classical sacred composition. The song celebrates Christ as the source of joy, strength, and spiritual fulfillment, recognizing that even life's simplest pleasures find their deepest meaning in divine love. Smallwood's expressive melodic writing and rich gospel harmonies lend the text an intimate, deeply personal character. Sung during Communion, the hymn reminds us that the love proclaimed in today's Gospel is not an abstract principle, but a living relationship with Christ, whose presence sustains and nourishes us.

Charles Wesley's **Love divine, all loves excelling**, first published in 1747, is one of the great hymns of Christian devotion. Its text is both a prayer for Christ's indwelling presence and a vision of humanity transformed by divine grace. The tune HYFRYDOL, whose Welsh name means "cheerful" or "pleasant," was composed by Rowland Hugh Prichard in the nineteenth century. Its expansive melody and strong harmonic structure make it especially effective for congregational singing. As the closing hymn, it sends us into the world with a prayer that the love we have received may transform our lives. Its final words, "lost in wonder, love, and praise," return us to the opening hymn's vision of all creation united in worship of the God who is Love.