



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 Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost • Kickoff Sunday

September 13, 2026 • 10:00 A.M.

Prelude and Welcome

All stand and join in singing Hymn 410

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing:
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.

2 Praise him for his grace and favor
to his people in distress;
praise him still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

3 Father-like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Widely yet his mercy flows.

4 Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.

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.

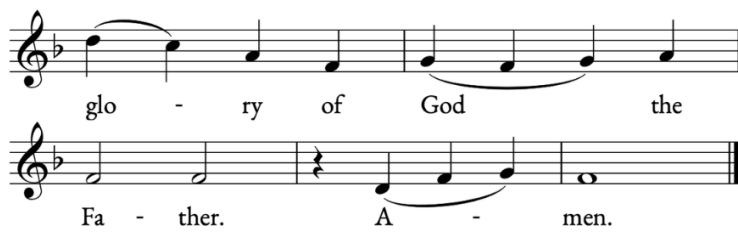
Lauda anima

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

All sing the Gloria in excelsis S-280

Robert Powell

Glo-ry to God in the
high - est, and peace to his peo-ple on earth. Lord
God, heaven-ly King, al-migh-ty God and Fa - ther, we
wor - ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your
glo - ry. Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the
Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a-way the
sin of the world: have mer - cy on us; you are
seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther: re - ceive our
prayer. For you a-lone are the Ho - ly One, -
you a - lone are the Lord, you a - lone are the Most
High, Je - sus Christ with the Ho - ly Spi - rit, in the



Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us pray. O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

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

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

So then, each of us will be accountable to God. *Romans 14:1-12*

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

A Portion of Psalm 103 *sung by the choir*

- 8 The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
- 9 He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.
- 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.
- 12 As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.
- 13 As a father cares for his children, *
so does the Lord care for those who fear him.

All stand and sing **Hymn 551**

Festal Song

- 1 Rise up, ye saints of God!
Have done with lesser things,
give heart and soul and mind and strength
to serve the King of kings.
- 2 Rise up, ye saints of God!
His kingdom tarries long:
Lord, bring the day of truth and love
and end the night of wrong.
- 3 Lift high the cross of Christ!
Tread where his feet have trod;
and quickened by the Spirit's power,
rise up, ye saints of God!

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

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

Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what

had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart." *Matthew 18:21-35*

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

Let us pray to the Lord.

People We beseech you, O Lord.

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.

Psalms 50:14

Offertory Anthem

John Ireland

*Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it. Love is strong as death.
Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.
Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,
that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.
Ye are washed, ye are sanctified,
ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation;
that ye should show forth the praises of him
who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God,
that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice,
holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

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*

Ho - ly, Ho - ly —
Ho - ly Lord God of pow'r and might: Heav'n and
earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san-na in the
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.**

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

Scott Evans Seibert
Barbara Wells Seibert
Pao Tee Wong

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** *Mark Miller*

Draw the cir - cle, draw the cir - cle
wide. Draw the cir - cle, draw the cir - cle wide.
No one stands a-lone, we'll stand side by side. Draw the
cir - cle, draw the cir - cle wide. Draw the wide. Draw the
cir - cle wide, draw it wi - der still. Let this
be our song: no one stands a-lone. Stand-ing side by side,
draw the cir - cle, draw the cir - cle
wide. Draw the wide.

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 603**

St. Botolph

- 1 When Christ was lifted from the earth,
his arms stretched out above
through every culture, every birth,
to draw an answering love.
- 2 Still east and west his love extends
and always, near or far,
he calls and claims us as his friends
and loves us as we are.
- 3 Where generation, class, or race
divide us to our shame,
he sees not labels but a face,
a person, and a name.
- 4 Thus freely loved, though fully known,
may I in Christ be free
to welcome and accept his own
as Christ accepted me.

Dismissal

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

Postlude

Music Notes

Today's music moves from joyful praise through repentance and forgiveness toward an ever-widening vision of Christian community. Our opening hymn, **Praise, my soul, the King of heaven**, is Henry Francis Lyte's paraphrase of Psalm 103, set to John Goss's noble tune *Lauda anima*. Its words anticipate the appointed psalm's proclamation of a God who is "full of compassion and mercy."

John Ireland's anthem **Greater Love Hath No Man** weaves together passages from the Song of Solomon and the writings of John, Peter, and Paul. Composed in 1912, it begins with love's unconquerable strength and culminates in an appeal to offer ourselves to God as "a living sacrifice"—words drawn from the chapter immediately preceding today's reading from Romans.

At Communion, **Draw the Circle Wide**, with words by Gordon Light and music by Mark A. Miller, responds directly to Paul's command to welcome one another without judgment. Its refrain reminds us that no one stands alone and invites the Church to enlarge the circle of belonging.

Our closing hymn, **When Christ was lifted from the earth**, pairs Brian Wren's text with Gordon Slater's tune *St. Botolph*. Christ's outstretched arms become an image of reconciling love that reaches across every division of culture, race, and class. Having received God's limitless mercy, we are sent out to welcome and forgive others as Christ has welcomed and forgiven us.