



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 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 27, 2026 • 10:00 A.M.

Prelude and Welcome

*Children follow Storytime Leaders downstairs during the
Opening Hymn, as soon as the procession has passed.*

All stand and join in singing **Hymn 296** *Engelberg*

- 1 We know that Christ is raised and dies no more.
Embraced by death he broke its fearful hold;
And our despair he turned to blazing joy. Alleluia!
- 2 We share by water in his saving death.
Reborn we share with him an Easter life
As living members of a living Christ. Alleluia!
- 3 The Father's splendor clothes the Son with life.
The Spirit's power shakes the Church of God.
Baptized we live with God the Three in One. Alleluia!
- 4 A new creation comes to life and grows
As Christ's new body takes on flesh and blood
The universe restored and whole we sing. Alleluia! Amen.

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

Celebrant There is one Body and one Spirit;
People **There is one hope in God's call to us;**

Celebrant One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;
People **One God and Father of all.**

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.**

*The flowers on the altar are given
to the glory of God and in memory of
Elizabeth F. Lombardi • Raymond R. Lombardi*

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us pray. O God, you declare your almighty
power chiefly in showing mercy and pity: Grant
us the fullness of your grace, that we, running to
obtain your promises, may become partakers of
your heavenly treasure; 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 Prophet Ezekiel**

The word of the Lord came to me: What do you mean by
repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The
parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set
on edge"? As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no
more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine;
the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it
is only the person who sins that shall die.

Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O
house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are
unfair? When the righteous turn away from their
righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for
the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again,
when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have
committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save
their life. Because they considered and turned away from all
the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely
live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, "The way
of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is
it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you
according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn
from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your
ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have
committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a
new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no
pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn,
then, and live.

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

A Portion of Psalm 25 *sung by the choir*

- 1 Unto thee, O LORD, will I lift up my soul;
my God, I have put my trust in thee: *
O let me not be confounded,
neither let mine enemies triumph over me.
- 2 For all they that hope in thee shall not be ashamed; *
but such as transgress without a cause
shall be put to confusion.
- 3 Show me thy ways, O LORD, *
and teach me thy paths.
- 4 Lead me forth in thy truth, and learn me: *
for thou art the God of my salvation;
in thee hath been my hope all the day long.
- 5 Call to remembrance, O LORD, thy tender mercies, *
and thy loving-kindnesses, which have been ever of old.
- 6 O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; *
but according to thy mercy think thou upon me,
O LORD, for thy goodness.
- 7 Gracious and righteous is the LORD; *
therefore, will he teach sinners in the way.
- 8 Them that are meek shall he guide in judgment; *
and such as are gentle, them shall he learn his way.

All stand and sing **Hymn 686**

Nettleton

- 1 Come, thou fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace!
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! O fix me on it,
mount of God's unchanging love.
- 2 Here I find my greatest treasure;
hither by thy help, I've come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.
- 3 Oh, to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee;
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, oh, take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

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

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

When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him."

Matthew 21:23-32

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.

Children return from Storytime.

From the Baptism Family: *The Episcopal Church has always been an important part of my life. I was baptized and confirmed in an Episcopal church in New Orleans and attended an Episcopal day school from pre-K to eighth grade. Then when Chris and I got married, we chose an Episcopal church in Boston for our ceremony. It is important to us that our daughter, Catherine, is baptized in the Episcopal faith as the first step in a life of faith and community. Chris and I have chosen to baptize Catherine at St. Stephen's because my parents have been members of the congregation since 2011 when they moved to Ridgefield from New Orleans. Whenever Chris and I have been in Ridgefield to visit, the congregation has always been warm and welcoming. We expect to be in Ridgefield from time to time with Catherine and would love for her to be part of the extended St. Stephen's community.*

HOLY BAPTISM

Presentation of the Candidate

Celebrant The Candidates for Holy Baptism will now be presented.

Parents & Godparents I present Catherine Joy to receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

Celebrant Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?

Parents & Godparents I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

Parents & Godparents I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?

Parents & Godparents I renounce them.

Celebrant Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?

Parents & Godparents I renounce them.

Celebrant Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

Parents & Godparents I renounce them.

Celebrant Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?

Parents & Godparents I do.

Celebrant Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?

Parents & Godparents I do.

Celebrant Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?

Parents & Godparents I do.

The Celebrant addresses the congregation, saying

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

People **We will.**

All stand for The Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Celebrant Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

Do you believe in God the Father?

People **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

Celebrant Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

People **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 to the dead. 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.**

Celebrant Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

People **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.**

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People **I will, with God's help.**

Celebrant May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers for the Candidates

Celebrant Let us now pray for *this* person who is to receive the Sacrament of new birth.

Leader Deliver *them*, O Lord, from the way of sin and death.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Open *their* hearts to your grace and truth.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Fill *them* with your holy and life-giving Spirit.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Keep *them* in the faith and communion of your holy Church.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Teach *them* to love others in the power of the Spirit.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Send *them* into the world in witness to your love.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader Bring *them* to the fullness of your peace and glory.

People **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Celebrant Grant, O Lord, that all who are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ your Son may live in the power of his resurrection and look for him to come again in glory; who lives and reigns now and forever. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving over the Water

The Celebrant blesses the water, first saying

The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

Celebrant We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

At the following words, the Celebrant touches the water. Now sanctify this water, we pray you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that those who here are cleansed from sin and born again may continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ

our Savior. To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and for ever.

Amen.

The Baptism

Celebrant N., I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Then the Priest places a hand on the person's head,

marking on the forehead the sign of the cross and saying

N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. **Amen.**

Celebrant Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. **Amen.**

Celebrant Let us welcome the newly baptized.

All **We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.**

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

Gerald Near

Christ hath a garden walled around,

A Paradise of fruitful ground,

Chosen by love and fenced by grace

From out the world's wide wilderness.

Like trees of spice his servants stand,

There planted by his mighty hand;

By Eden's gracious streams, that flow

To feed their beauty where they grow.

Awake, O wind of heav'n and bear

Their sweetest perfume through the air:

Stir up, O south, the boughs that bloom,

Till the beloved Master come:

That he may come, and linger yet

Among the trees that he hath set;

That he may evermore be seen

To walk amid the springing green.

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.

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 490**

Houston

1 I want to walk as a child of the light.

I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world.

The star of my life is Jesus.

In him there is no darkness at all.

The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God.

Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

2 I want to see the brightness of God.

I want to look at Jesus.

Clear sun of righteousness, shine on my path,

and show me the way to the Father. *Refrain*

3 I'm looking for the coming of Christ.

I want to be with Jesus.

When we have run with patience the race,

we shall know the joy of Jesus. *Refrain*

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 304**

Land of Rest

- 1 I come with joy to meet my Lord,
 forgiven, loved, and free,
 in awe and wonder to recall,
 his life laid down for me.
- 2 I come with Christians far and near
 to find, as all are fed,
 the new community of love
 in Christ's communion bread.
- 3 As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
 each proud division ends.
 The love that made us, makes us one,
 and strangers now are friends.
- 4 And thus with joy we meet our Lord.
 His presence, always near,
 is in such friendship better known,
 we see and praise him here.
- 5 Together met, together bound,
 we'll go our different ways
 and as his people in the world,
 we'll live and speak his praise.

Dismissal

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

Postlude

Music Notes

We know that Christ is raised and dies no more draws especially upon St. Paul's teaching in Romans 6: through Baptism, Christians share both Christ's death and his risen life. Its imagery moves outward from the individual believer to the Church and finally to the renewal of the whole creation. The recurring Alleluias make every stanza an Easter proclamation: Baptism is participation

in Christ's victory over death. The tune ENGELBERG was composed by Charles Villiers Stanford, who was professor at both Cambridge and the Royal College of Music, and helped shape several generations of British church music.

Robert Robinson wrote **Come, thou fount of every blessing** in 1758, amid the evangelical revival that transformed eighteenth-century English Christianity. Robinson had undergone a religious conversion after hearing the celebrated preacher George Whitefield. His hymn is strikingly candid about the instability of the human will: "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it." That confession closely reflects today's readings, in which neither righteousness nor disobedience is treated as fixed and unchangeable. The American tune NETTLETON appeared in print during the early nineteenth century. Its sweeping melodic contours and repeating rhythmic patterns from American folk-hymn tradition have helped make Robinson's text one of the most widely sung hymns in North America.

The text of **Christ hath a garden** was published by the English poet Robert Bridges in *The Yattendon Hymnal* of 1899. Bridges, later Poet Laureate, compiled that influential collection as part of his effort to restore musical and literary distinction to English hymnody. The poem draws principally upon the garden imagery of the Song of Songs: the enclosed garden becomes an image of the Church, planted and protected by God, nourished by living water, and awaiting the coming of the beloved. American composer and church musician Gerald Near set the text in 1973. His music combines the clarity of Anglican choral writing with a supple modern harmonic language. The anthem's garden imagery is particularly resonant today: it recalls the vineyard of Jesus' parable, the waters of Baptism, and the newly baptized life that must be cultivated, nourished, and brought to fruition.

British theologian and hymn writer Brian Wren wrote **I come with joy to meet my Lord** in 1968 and revised it in 1970. The hymn emerged from a series of sermons on the Lord's Supper and presents Holy Communion as both encounter and transformation. Its movement is deliberate: the individual comes to Christ, discovers a new community in the breaking of bread, and is then sent into the world as part of Christ's people. The final stanza therefore makes it especially suitable as a closing hymn: those gathered and fed at the altar now "go our different ways" to live the faith they have proclaimed.

