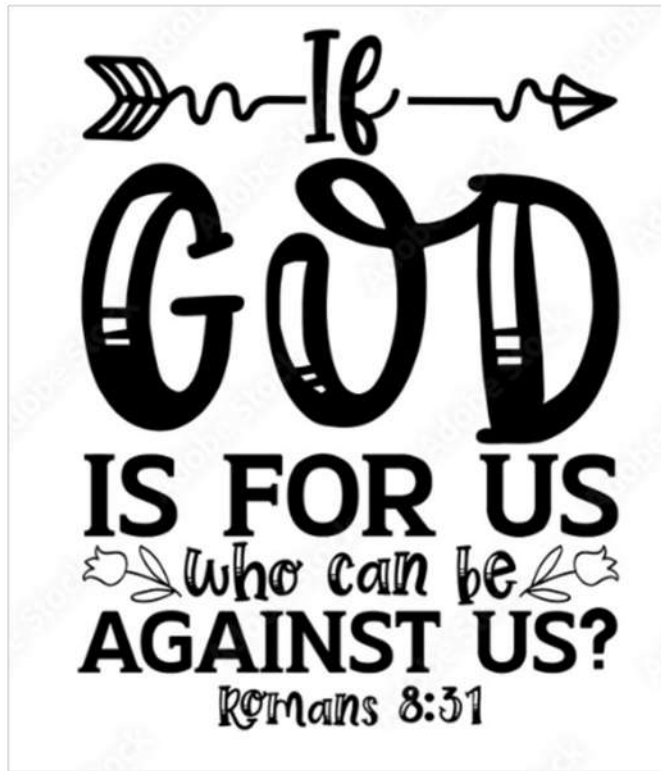


First St. John Lutheran Church
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www.firststjohn.com

Rev. Jerald K. Rayl, Pastor

Dr. Anthony Pattin, Church Musician
Jo-Anne Chrysochoos, Director of Music
Cheri Sergent, Bell Choir, Director
Jessica Miller, Office Manager



Called through faith; Gathered in worship; Serving the community

July 26, 2026 - 9:00 am

July 26, 2026

Ninth Sunday After Pentecost

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! Through the Summer months we offer one service. Holy Communion will be celebrated every Sunday throughout the Summer.

9:00 am Worship

LIVESTREAM AND RECORDED WORSHIP: We livestream the service on our church website at www.firststjohn.com. Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website

SMILE! YOU'RE ON CAMERA: Please remember you may be on camera during the livestream and the recording of the service.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Please remember to silence your cell phone before church begins. Thanks!

NURSERY is not monitored during the summer months but you are welcome to sit with your child downstairs as needed. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

RESTROOMS are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

FLOWERS: If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the lounge. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

MEMORIALS: If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office.

ORDER OF WORSHIP—9:00 am

Prelude Dr. Anthony Pattin

Ringin of the Bell

Opening Hymn

"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness" No. 843

Confession and Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose compassion endures forever.

C: Amen

P: Let us confess our sin to God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Compassionate God,

C: we confess to you all our sins. Our burden is heavy, and we cannot free ourselves. In your mercy, call us back to you. Your yoke is easy and your burden is light. Restore us to dwell in your peace. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

P: Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." In the name of God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven. Rest in God's love.

C: Amen.

P: The peace of the Lord be with you all.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us share the peace of the Lord.

The congregation may greet one another by shaking hands, fist bumping, or any other form of greeting with the words, "Peace be with you." We conclude the sharing of the peace by singing:

"Lord I Lift Your Name on High" No. 857

***"Lord I lift your name on high;
Lord I love to sing your praises,
I'm so glad you're in my life,***

***I'm so glad you came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth to show the way.
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky;
Lord, I lift your name on high."***

Prayer of the Day

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you

P: Let us pray. Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

(Please be seated)

Announcements

VBS KIDS SING

"God Is"

"Hey, Hey, Hey!"

FIRST READING: Romans 8:26-28, 35-39

These words celebrate the depth of God's actions for us. Through Christ's death for us and the activity of the Spirit praying for us, we are fused to God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. Nothing, not even death itself, is able to separate us from such incredible divine love.

²⁶ The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

(Please stand)

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 13.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Throughout Matthew's gospel, Jesus and his disciples proclaim the good news that "the kingdom of heaven is near!" Here, Jesus offers several brief parables that explore the implications of this announcement for people's lives.

³¹ [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." ³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and reburyed; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵² And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

SERMON

Pastor Rayl

Sermon Hymn

"We Praise You, O God"

No. 870

(Please stand)

Apostles' Creed

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
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.

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. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer *(Each petition concludes with this response)*

P: Hear us, O Lord,

C: your mercy is great.

The Offering

Offertory Music

Dr. Anthony Pattin

Offering Prayer

P: Let us pray. God of creation, you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous

with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always.

C: Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



P: In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: Again, after supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer *(prayed by all)*

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, forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

P: The risen Christ invites us to this table.

C: Come, eat and be satisfied.

(Please be seated)

The Communion *(distribution will be continuous)*

All baptized Christians, believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bringing to us the gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, are welcome to gather at the Lord's table. Infants, children and others who have not been baptized are welcome to come to receive a blessing; please make an X with your arms across your chest."

**** Please be certain to fill our a communion record card then put it in the offering plate or hand it to the usher when directed to go up to receive the bread and wine.*

If you wish to receive apple juice instead of wine, place your hand over your shoulder as you approach the person distributing the wine.

(After all have received communion, please stand.)

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and sustain you in God's grace.

C: Amen.

Prayer after Communion

P: Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life; and we pray that in your mercy you would strengthen us, through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing

P: Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation, (+) bless you now and always.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn

"In Thee Is Gladness"

No. 867

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Dr. Anthony Pattin

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

John Roth

Bob Haar

SOUND BOARD

Ross Church

PERSONAL NEEDS PANTRY

Please purchase full size items.

dish soap	shampoo, child	disposable razors
paper towel	laundry soap	toothbrush, adult
toilet paper	fabric softener sheets	toothpaste, adult
tissues	body lotion	sanitary pads
deodorant	body soap	band aids
shampoo, adult		

This is a list of the items that will provide a month's worth of hygiene supplies to families or individuals in our neighborhood to help them stay clean and healthy. We always welcome any donations from our congregation members.

If you would like to donate items, please donate only full size products as sample sizes will not last a month. If you would prefer a Pantry volunteer to do the shopping for you, we welcome monetary donations. Please make out checks to First St. John Lutheran Church and write Personal Needs Pantry on the memo line.



July 26, 2026

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

One Sure Thing

What would you be willing to risk for a "sure thing"? When you have had to think about directions to take in life, no doubt you have weighed the possibilities, trying to assess what gain may be obtained at what cost. Many students, for example, increasingly are finding it necessary to examine schools and courses of study relative to the costs of rising tuition and the burden of educational debt. Still, higher education is generally considered a "sure thing": a good investment that prepares one for life's work and minimizes risks.

Common sense, good judgment, and the shared experience of others all help us to make life's decisions, including how best to use our resources wisely. We invest time as well as money, hoping for a beneficial return on both kinds of expenditures. Wouldn't we like to bank on a sure thing?

Solomon encountered a sure thing: God's offer to grant anything Solomon requested. By asking for an understanding mind able to discern between good and evil, Solomon received God's favor along with the true wisdom he sought. Our sure thing comes in the person of Jesus Christ. Through Christ's death and resurrection and in the waters of baptism, we are assured of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, now and for all time.

God's free gift of grace in Jesus Christ is the sure thing for which we offer our thanks and praise this day. Such a treasure as this--the kingdom of heaven and no less--is certainly worth our close attention: other pursuits pale in comparison! Today's gospel celebrates those who understand that some risks are more than justified by their prize. Half-hearted responses to God's offers of relationship, forgiveness, and resurrection leave us missing out on the one and only sure thing. The kingdom of heaven is hidden in plain sight, in our midst. What will we risk to gain it?