

## Sermon followed by Service

November 6, 2022

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Picture with me, imagine with me - the finish line, your finish line. When you picture your finish line, what picture come to mind? Maybe you picture the last of your leaves raked up. Or making it to the highest level of video game nirvana. Or maybe for your finish line, you think of making it, graduating from high school or college, moving out on your own, getting the job you went to school for, finding the love of your life - maybe that's your idea of the finish line. Or maybe for your finish line, you dream of making it to retirement, getting the house fixed up, paid off. Or maybe your finish line is getting out of the house, a cabin up north in the summer, a place down south in the winter. Or maybe when you picture your finish line, this is what comes to mind - falling asleep on the couch or your favorite comfy chair at the end of the day. If - when I said: "picture your finish line" - if any of that came to mind, I hope it was only for a moment, only for the blink of an eye.

Why? When I said: "Picture your finish line," this is what I hope came to your mind: a picture of Jesus and the Father, arms open, with a smile beaming full of love. You hear them: "**Welcome home! Well done, good and faithful servant.**" You see all around you the light and the life of heaven. And then when it's time for the big finish line reception, you see the saints in heaven, not just Peter and Paul, Mary and Martha; you see Bill and JoAnn, Helmut, Doris, and Juanita. You see the hands that showed you how to fold your hands. You hear the voices that taught you: "Come, Lord Jesus." "Now I lay me down to sleep." "Our Father who art in heaven." You see the smiles; you hear the thanks from those you taught to pray, those you brought to church, those you brought to Jesus.

And somehow your arthritis and sciatica are gone. Your joints don't hurt anymore. Your eyes don't squint any more. Your ears, they actually hear what people say the first time they say it. You feel the best you've ever felt - ever. On the other side of the finish line, your body is made new. It's still your body, not a trade-in and trade-up model. It's your body made perfect. Instead of perishable, aging, breaking down, falling apart, expiring, it's imperishable, never aging, never breaking down, never falling apart. Never expiring. Instead of mortal, susceptible to death, on the other side of the finish line, you and your body will be immortal. Not just a physical body, bound by the rules of physics and biology, but a spiritual body, free like Jesus with his body. In your new body, you will be together with God and the angels, celebrating life and love together with God and his people - forever. That's what's at the finish line.

What's between here and the finish line? Disease and worse - dis-ease - dismay, distress, disgust, disappointment. Dismay, distress, disgust, disappointment when we see what the world is doing around us. Dismay, distress, disgust, disappointment when we see people close to us get close and tight with the world following the ways of the world. And dismay, distress, disgust, disappointment when we see how we can be so like the world.

That's right. What else is between here and the finish line? Distraction. The ways of the world distracting us. The good life distracting us. Our aches and pains, our hurt and heartaches distracting us.

((Which is more dangerous for you - the dis-ease of this life? Or the distractions of this life? Which are getting between you and the finish line?))

What's between here and the finish line? Death. In our lesson, Paul describes death, not as an event, not as a state of being, but as an enemy. We've all had a taste of what death can do. We've felt death in our bodies. And we've felt death in our hearts. And it hurts. It hurts so that we feel dismay, distress, distraught, disturbed in our hearts. Death hurts, and so we look for ways to avoid death, delay death, deny death, distract ourselves from death. Paul gives us a better answer for death than distract, delay, and deny. At the finish line, we will see - **“death has been swallowed up in victory.”**

I should be more clear. With Jesus. At the finish line with Jesus, we will see **“death has been swallowed up in victory.”** If I cross the finish line without Jesus, maybe just pretending to have Jesus, then what I hear from Jesus won't be “Welcome Home!” What I will hear from Jesus is **“depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”** But with Jesus, when we cross the finish line, we will see **“death has been swallowed up in victory!”** And we will join God's judging cheer: **“Where, o death, is your victory? Where, o death, is your sting?”**

Why? You've heard Paul say: **“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Here Paul uses a different picture: **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** I read that and part of me says: “What's Paul saying?” Another part of me answers: “Jesus gives us the victory.” That's true, but what about that first line: **“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law”**? What does that mean? I usually think of the sting of death as the pain of dying, more broadly, as the sting (the hurt and heartache) of living in a world of death, or I think of the sting of death as hell. But Paul sees the sting

of death as sin. Dying is a result, hell is a result - the cause is sin. Death gets its victims by sin. Take away sin, and what happens to death? No sting.

And when Paul talks about the “power of sin,” I usually think of sin’s tantalizing power, sin’s power to lure me in, to suck me in to its lie. But Paul is talking about the “power of sin” in a different way. He says: “The power of sin is the law” because Paul is thinking about how the law condemns sin and damns the perpetrator of sin. Take away the law that condemns, and what harm can sin and death then do?

And that is what Jesus did! In your place, in my place, in place of all humanity, Jesus took God’s law - the law that would condemn us - and he kept it and he obeyed it perfectly. He obeyed every command; he satisfied every demand. In life and death, he satisfied God’s law perfectly - **“It is finished.”** At the same time, Jesus took our sin - your sin, my sin, the sin of the whole, wide world - and as the Lamb of God he paid the price so that - with Jesus - God sees your sin gone and you forgiven. In other words, God sees the law that would condemn us as satisfied; he sees the sin that would damn us taken away. In Jesus, the power of sin is neutralized and done; the sting of death is neutralized and gone. And with Paul we give thanks: **“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Now what? We get to see death swallowed up in Christ’s victory. We get to see the finish line with our perishable bodies, crumbling and rotting, made imperishable, never to age or decay. We get to see the finish line with our mortal bodies made immortal, never to die. We get to see the finish line and what we will be like at the finish line - all of our aging swallowed up, all of our breaking up and

breaking down swallowed up, all of our dying swallowed up. We get to see ourselves alive and victorious with Jesus, alive and victorious like Jesus.

Not just at the finish line. That's the way we get to see ourselves today. Yes, that's the way you get to see yourself today - alive and victorious with Jesus, alive and victorious like Jesus. We don't have to live like death is the end and that's all we have to look forward to. We don't have to live defeated, dismayed, distraught, disappointed. We don't have to live distracted looking for some better life. We get to live focused, delighted, and determined. Focused, delighted and determined to live the best life. Focused, delighted, and determined to live the Jesus life. Focused, delighted, and determined to live alive and victorious with Jesus. As Paul says: **“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”** And so we see our finish line, and we live focused, delighted, and determined - with Jesus. Amen.

November 5 & 6, 2022

## DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY... it can seem that we are surrounded by death and defeat.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see why we get to live as winners - forever!

### OPENING HYMN

*"For All the Saints"*

Hymn 880 vs. 1-5

For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
who thee by faith before the world confessed,  
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;  
thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh, may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold  
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old  
and win with them the victor's crown of gold. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh, blest communion, fellowship divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine. Alleluia! Alleluia!

And when the fight is fierce, the warfare long,  
steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,  
and hearts are brave again and arms are strong. Alleluia! Alleluia!

### INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

### CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

**C: Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.  
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,  
For sins of habit and sins of choice,  
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,  
I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.  
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**

#### **ABSOLUTION**

**M:** Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

#### **LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)**

**M:** In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

**M:** For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

**C: Christ, have mercy.**

**M:** For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

**M:** Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

**C: Amen.**

#### **HYMN**

*"For All the Saints"*

Hymn 880 vs. 6-8

The golden evening brightens in the west;  
soon, soon, to faithful warriors cometh rest;  
sweet is the calm of paradise the blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!

But, lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day:  
the saints triumphant rise in bright array;  
the King of glory passes on his way. Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,  
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,  
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia! Alleluia!

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one holy Church, the body of Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow the example of your blessed saints in lives of faith and willing service and with them at last inherit the inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who love you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

#### **FIRST READING**

*Hebrews 11:8–10, 13–16, 32–40*

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained



what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**A SAINTS TRIUMPHANT CONFESSION OF FAITH: A READING OF PROMISES FULFILLED**

M: I am resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

C: **And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** (*John 11:25-26*)  
JoAnn Hallan June 24, 2022

M: For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.

C: **So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.** (*Romans 14:7-8*)  
Helmut Appelt July 20, 2022

M: My flesh and my heart may fail,

C: **but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.** (*Psalms 73:26*)  
Doris Sundell July 23, 2022

M: I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

C: **And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.**  
Juanita Rickel September 19, 2022

M: Be faithful, even to the point of death.

C: **And I will give you the crown of life.** (*Revelation 2:10*)

William Hallan October 14, 2022

M: Thanks be to God.

C: **He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

HYMN

*“Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See”*

**Hymn 884**

Lord, when your glory I shall see and taste your kingdom’s pleasure,  
your blood my royal robe shall be, my joy beyond all measure!  
When I appear before your throne, your righteousness shall be my crown;  
with these I need not hide me. And there, in garments richly wrought,  
as your own bride I shall be brought, to stand in joy beside you.

SECOND READING

*1 Corinthians 15:50–58*

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*Revelation 2:10*

Alleluia. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. Alleluia.

**GOSPEL**

*Luke 6:20–23*

Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now,  
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you,  
when they exclude you and insult you  
and reject your name as evil,  
because of the Son of Man.

“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

*“Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart”*

**Hymn 817**

Lord, thee I love with all my heart; I pray thee, ne'er from me depart,  
with tender mercy cheer me. Earth has no pleasure I would share;  
yea, heav'n itself were void and bare if thou, Lord, wert not near me.  
And should my heart for sorrow break, my trust in thee can nothing shake.  
Thou art the portion I have sought; thy precious blood my soul has bought.  
Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,  
forsake me not! I trust thy Word.

Yea, Lord, 'twas thy rich bounty gave my body, soul, and all I have  
in this poor life of labor. Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place  
may glorify thy lavish grace and help and serve my neighbor.  
Let no false doctrine me beguile; let Satan not my soul defile.  
Give strength and patience unto me to bear my cross and follow thee.  
Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord,  
in death thy comfort still afford.

Lord, let at last thine angels come, to Abr'ham's bosom bear me home  
that I may die unfearing; and in its narrow chamber keep  
my body safe in peaceful sleep until thy reappearing.  
And then from death awaken me that these mine eyes with joy may see,  
O Son of God, thy glorious face, my Savior and my fount of grace.  
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend,  
and I will praise thee without end.

## SERMON

### 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, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. 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, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian 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.**

**PRAYER**

**M:** Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

O Lord, faithful God, we commend ourselves, our bodies and souls, and all things into your keeping. In your righteousness, deliver us from all that would harm the body and assault the soul.

**C: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**M:** Righteous God, bless all ministers of the Gospel and the congregations committed to their care, that the comfort of Christ's sacrifice and the joy of his resurrection may be proclaimed to all who grieve their sin and mourn their dead. Also, Lord, turn our comfort to confidence and our joy to zeal so that we live as winners with Jesus.

**C: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**M:** Lord, as we ask for your deliverance and safe-keeping, your comfort and your joy, impress on us and inspire us so that we don't pray and live for self, but that we pray and live for your glory and the good of your people, filled with this confidence – "that our labor in the Lord is not in vain."

**C: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

**M:** Almighty God, as we enter another election week, bless all who are and all who will be in authority over us, especially those who work to bring peace and justice, that they may be inclined to your will and to walk according to your commandments. Grant wisdom to our citizens and courage and competence to our leaders.

**C: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

M: O God, you are our rock and fortress in our distress. Hear our prayers for those who are sick, suffering, or recovering from illness or injury [especially \_\_\_\_\_].

C: **Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.**

M: Eternal Father, though death still claims our mortal bodies, you have raised up Christ, that we may pass through death to our own joyful resurrection and to the great reunion with those who have died in Christ and now rest from their labors.

Receive our thanks for all the saints and for their witness, and hear us on behalf of those who mourn the loss of those they love [especially \_\_\_\_\_]. Bring us at last to the place of everlasting light and life, that we may see you face to face and live in your presence forevermore; through the same Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

#### THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

Therefore with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *Sanctus***

**O holy, holy, holy  
Lord God of pow'r and might,  
Your glory, earth and heaven  
In countless ways recite.  
Hosanna! Come and save us,  
Lord God of hosts on high,  
And in your grace and mercy  
Receive our fervent cry.**

**Hosanna in the highest!  
How truly blest is he  
Who in God's name is coming  
To set his people free!  
He comes to bring salvation  
And with his blood outpoured,  
Deliver us from bondage—  
Hosanna, mighty Lord!**

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

M: Blessed are you, O Lord of heaven and earth. We praise and thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, and we remember the great acts of love through which he has ransomed us from sin, death, and the devil's power.

By his incarnation, he became one with us.  
By his perfect life, he fulfilled your holy will.  
By his innocent death, he overcame hell.  
By his rising from the grave, he opened heaven.

Invited by your grace and instructed by your Word, we approach your table with repentant and joyful hearts. Strengthen us through Christ's body and blood, and preserve us in the true faith until we feast with him and all his ransomed people in glory everlasting.

C: **Amen.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

## LAMB OF GOD *Agnus Dei*

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

Amen.

## DISTRIBUTION HYMN

*"Jerusalem the Golden"*

**Hymn 890**

Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest—  
the sight of it refreshes the weary and oppressed.  
I know not, oh, I know not what joys await us there,  
what radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion, all jubilant with song  
and bright with many—an angel and all the martyr throng.  
The Prince is ever in them, the daylight is serene;  
the pastures of the blessed are ever rich and green.

There is the throne of David, and there, from care released,  
the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast.  
And they who with their leader have conquered in the fight  
forever and forever are clad in robes of white.



O sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect!  
In mercy, Jesus, bring us to that dear land of rest;  
you are with God the Father and Spirit ever blest.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

#### CLOSING HYMN

*"Jerusalem the Golden"*

**Hymn 889**

Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest—  
the sight of it refreshes the weary and oppressed.  
I know not, oh, I know not what joys await us there,  
what radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare:  
to sing the hymn unending with all the martyr throng,  
amidst the halls of Zion resounding full with song.

O sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect!  
O sweet and blessed country that eager hearts expect,  
where they who with their leader have conquered in the fight  
forever and forever are clad in robes of white:  
in mercy, Jesus, bring us to that dear land of rest  
where sings the host of heaven your glorious name to bless.

The Christ is ever with them, the daylight is serene;  
the pastures of the blessed are ever rich and green.  
There is the throne of David, and there, from care released,  
the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast.  
To God enthroned in glory the Church's voices blend,  
the Lamb forever blessed, the Light that knows no end.

## OFFERING

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**Thank you to the St. John Senior Choir, Tim Samelson, Steve Lemerand, and  
Charles Ledvina for beautifying our worship service.**

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## MISSION NOTES

**Updates from Ukraine:** St. John Lutheran in Lazarivka (SW of Ternopil) currently does not have a pastor. The economy throughout Europe has suffered greatly for the last 3 yrs & has impacted our fellow Christians as well. Thankfully, Pastor Serhiy Somin was able to visit this congregation, hold a worship service, & deliver food aid in September. Many refugees from harder-hit war zones in Ukraine are currently living in Lazarivka & plans are being made to hold services there at least once per month to witness to all.

Please pray for Pastor Somin & our fellow believers in all of Ukraine as they work through the recent challenges of power being cut throughout the country. Your financial gifts are especially appreciated at this time.

## **Ukrainian music ensemble performs in Germany**

In October, Baroque Plus, a Ukrainian musical group that includes members of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC), traveled to Germany to present concerts at several Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) congregations. These concerts were a thank you for the German church's support to Ukrainian refugees who fled the country to escape the war with Russia. These concerts not only showed the ULC's gratitude for that aid but also offered an opportunity to assimilate the refugees more fully into the German Lutheran churches.

Three sister church bodies—the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Germany, and WELS—worked together to plan the trip. Three ELFK congregations hosted the special worship services that included music from Baroque Plus, other German and Ukrainian hymns, gospel readings, devotions, and prayer.

“The services were edifying and beautiful,” says Rev. Roger Neumann, WELS' liaison to the Ukrainian Lutheran Church. “Translators made it possible that three languages were used during the service: Ukrainian, German, and English. Although, for the Lord's Prayer, all three languages were spoken at the same time, which was quite impressive.”

Fellowship times before, during, and after the services provided opportunities for members from the Ukrainian Church and German church to interact. “There was truly a unique bond of fellowship at each church, which flowed from a sense of empathy, Christian love and concern, and the powerful bond of unity that believers have in Christ. Strangers quickly became friends,” says Neumann. “We pray that those who attended the service, Ukrainian and German visitors who have no church home, will come again to learn more about Jesus and what he has done for them and for all people.”

Hanna Bulu, the leader of Baroque Plus and a member at Resurrection, Kiev, Ukraine, appreciated the opportunity to come to Germany. “After traveling thousands of kilometers from our native home, we met good friends in Germany – and also a long-forgotten feeling of peace and quiet. Such concerts are like bridges between churches, between hearts, between children of God, who are one in Christ.”

WELS, the ULC, and the ELFK are all part of the **Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference** (CELC), a group of 34 Lutheran church bodies from around the world committed to the teachings of the Lutheran Church found in the *Book of Concord*. This fellowship of believers offers support in faith and doctrine. “This was a blessing, given to us by our Lord, that flows from the unity of believers from around the world who form the CELC,” says Neumann. “The people from Ukraine who were there that week, as well as people from the various church bodies that form the CELC, can better understand that they are never alone.” Read more thoughts about this trip from ELFK President Rev. Michael Herbst at **wels.net/familyofbeliever**

## Feedback encouraged on doctrinal statement

Biblical doctrines and principles do not change. But there are times when those doctrines and principles need to be understood clearly as new situations arise and are addressed by the church. That is certainly true when it comes to what the Bible tells us about the God-given roles of men and women and the nature of their relationship with one another.

Our synod's current doctrinal statement on the roles of men and women is called "**Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles**." After more than a decade of work and discussion, it was adopted by the 1993 synod convention as a correct explanation of biblical truth and as our synod's formal doctrinal statement on the issue.

Since the adoption of "Scriptural Principles of Man and Woman Roles," our synod's doctrinal position has not changed; the statement still expresses biblical truth. But new questions and issues have arisen regarding the biblical roles of men and women that did not really exist in 1993. Understandably, those questions were not addressed at the time.

For those reasons, the Conference of Presidents determined that it would be beneficial for our synod to consider an updated restatement of the scriptural principles outlined in the 1993 document. After three years of work and study, a proposed draft of that statement is now ready. The new statement is entitled "**God's beautiful and balanced design for male and female**." The Conference of Presidents encourages you to study and discuss the statement and invites you to **provide feedback**.

Serving with you in Christ,  
WELS President Mark Schroeder

**Copies of "God's beautiful and balanced design for male and female" are available on the tract rack between church and school.**