

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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August 23, 2020 Contemporary 11:05 AM

Twelfth Sunday of Pentecost

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Deacon of Word and Service			Sandye Fletcher
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Music Minister			Robert Eaton
Congregational Chair			Curtiss Schonenberg
Creative Child Care Interim Director			Briana Bedford
Creative Child Care Executive Administrator			Courtney Busselman
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			O. C. S.
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor

VISION STATEMENT: Showing our love of God and neighbor, we will work to double the number of members that are serving as well as those that are being served from 2018 to 2021.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshipping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***

* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

INTRODUCTION

In Isaiah the people are advised to look to their spiritual ancestors as the rock from which they were hewn. Jesus declares that the church will be built on the rock of Peter's bold confession of faith. God's word of reconciliation and God's mercy are keys to the church's mission. Paul urges us to not be conformed to this world but to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, using our

individual gifts to build up the body of Christ. From the table we go forth to offer our spiritual worship through word and deed.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P As we have gathered to worship, we call on God's Spirit to help us recognize and confess our sins. Those places in our hearts, minds and actions, where we have fallen short of how God wants us to be, we confess. In this brief time of silence we privately ask God for forgiveness and help to be better; then we will join our voices in the printed confession.

Brief moment of silence.

P Lord,

C we confess that we often have refused the gift of your Spirit. Content in our dimness we shrink from your Light. Comfortable in our coolness we withdraw from your Fire. We would be moved – but carefully. We would feel – but mildly. We would see your face – but dimly. Forgive us for begrudging the coming of your Spirit, or for accepting your fire, only to smother it selfishly. Forgive us, and visit us again. We pray, now, in Jesus' name, not for warm thoughts, but for burning hearts. For there is much that we must see, and much that we must do. Amen.

P “Comfort my people,” says our God. “Comfort them! Tell them they have suffered long enough and their sins are now forgiven. Come to me and you will live.” (Isaiah 40:1-2; Amos 5:12)

C Amen.

GOSPEL SONG: COME, NOW IS THE TIME TO WORSHIP

Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart. Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow. Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose You now! Willingly we choose to surrender our lives, willingly our knees will bow. With all our heart, soul, mind and strength we gladly serve You now! **CHORUS**

Words and Music by Brian Doerksen. CCLI Song # 2430948
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GOSPEL: Matthew 16:13-20

At a climactic point in Jesus' ministry, God reveals to Peter that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of the living God,” and Jesus responds with the promise of a church that will overcome the very gates of Hades.

A The holy gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13-20.

¹³Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

GOSPEL SONG: COME, NOW IS THE TIME TO WORSHIP
Come, now is the time to worship. Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship. Come, just as you are before your God, come.

One day every tongue will confess you are God, one day every knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose You now!
Willingly we choose to surrender our lives, willingly our knees will bow.
With all our heart, soul, mind and strength we gladly serve You now! **CHORUS**

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SERMON

* **SERMON SONG: ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE**

PART 1:
Almighty God, my redeemer. My hiding place, my safe refuge.
No other name like Jesus, no pow'r can stand against you.
My feet are planted on this rock, and I will not be shaken.
My hope it comes from You alone, my Lord and my salvation!

PART 2: (Sing through twice)
Your praise is always on my lips,
Your word is living in my heart!
And I will praise You with a new song,
My soul will bless you, Lord.
You fill my life with greater joy, and I delight myself in You!
And I will praise You with a new song,
My soul will bless you, Lord.

**When I am weak, You make me strong. When I'm poor,
I know I'm rich. For in the power of Your name...
All things are possible! All things are possible!
All things are possible! All things are possible! (Back to Part 2)**

Words and Music by Darlene Zschech. CCLI Song #2245140 ©1997 Wondrous Worship. CCLI Lic #1729377

* APOSTLES' CREED

A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

C 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, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come 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.**

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS

A Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

A Lord our rock, you are our foundation in Jesus Christ, your Son, whom we confess as the living God. Prepare your church for its mission in bearing witness to Christ, both here at home and throughout the world.

A brief silence.

A You call us into this community, in which we, though many, are one in Christ. May we recognize in ourselves and in one another the unique gifts you have given us for the building up of the church for the sake of the world.

A brief silence.

A We pray for the family and friends of Eddie Ruth Hanks who passed away this past week. Be with them and comfort them during this difficult time.

A brief silence.

A We give thanks and praise for the birth of Willow Mae Ross to T.J. and Megan Ross and Felicity Jade Kanz to Luke and Kelly Kanz. Bless their families as they begin new lives together.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Calvin Roensch; Verline Schroeter; David Runk; Jack Frost; Dylon Neisner; Mark Lighthill;
Elsie Ashorn; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you.

A brief silence.

- A We pray those battling cancer including:
Charlie Hanks; Tim Dahlstrom; Gracie Brune; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Harvey Skow; Megan Burch; Jennifer Aleman; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Bill Stolle; Jamie Stokes; Jessica Mauchlen; Larry Guthrie; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Tina Barten; Anthony Baumbach; Bill Brayton; Cindy Masek; Noël Paden; Weston Swoboda; Denver Meyer; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Joe Hluchanek; Devon Tiffin; Stanley King; Monty Gillett; Dawn Foster; Amber Smith; Edward Halcolm; Alison Randazzo; Amber Kutach; Louis Camacho; Melvin Schobel; Janet Greene; Karen Teal; Sabrina Galindo; Debbie Grimes; Horst Traub; Margie Fisk; Preston Carter; Penny Miller; Carl Hahn; James Stock; Megan Cain; Bob Rutta; Ernest Moore; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker that they may know healing and comfort.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for all expectant mothers and especially for:
Kimberly Grazier; April Poncik; Heather Pavlicek Frieda; Alexis Templeton; Angela Koranek;
and Kaitlan (Rester) Helton that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for those who reside in care facilities and the homebound including:
Dolores Wessels; Alma Larmer; Doris Poppe; Bill Rodgers; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Coy Dell Schindler; R. O. (Reuben) Barten; Lavine Stancek; Mabel Krenek; Judy Brisco; Barbara Prause; Lou Cordes; Madeline Menke; Delores Purcell; Adeline Spross; Helen Perrard; Doris Horndt; Robert Little; Curtis Berger; Marjorie Brune; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Beatrice Zikuhr; Robert Eaton; James Booker; Deanna Lee; Don Morrison; Adrian Fritsch; and Sylvia Marburger that they receive your caring and compassion.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for all law enforcement officers, including Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Marley Mayo; Johnny Kovar; Abigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Andrew Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; Jessica Dimas; Zane Weido; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Randy Neuendorff; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette, as well as those active duty military members including Jeanna Willettz; Arturo Mares; Keven Rios; Michael Grahm; Brian Anderson; Landon

Cheatham; Bryan Kubena; Brad Bergfeld; Cody Jowers; Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Ryan Neisner; Anthony D'Angelo; Dalton Kapel; Kindra Dawson; and William Phillips that they are protected and kept safe.

A brief silence.

- A We pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregation, Cristo Rey in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic.

A brief silence.

- A You are the everlasting Rock from which we were hewn, and you restore your people to joy and gladness. In blessed memory and hope, we thank you for the lives of our beloved dead. Bring us with them to our heavenly home.

A brief silence.

- A In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

*** PEACE**

- P As Jesus shared peace, let us also share His peace with one another. *(Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)*

BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING

(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)

PRESENTATION OF OUR GIFTS

"Power of One" is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These "Power of One" dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.

* **OFFERING PRAYER**

P Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen.

* **REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS, PROMISES, AND COMMANDS**

* **LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to sing.

**C Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

* **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P Friends of Jesus, come to the table. Receive nourishment for your journey.

C Amen.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)

{Distribution will be continuous. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Please keep 6 feet between those who are not your family members. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor "Gluten-free, please." Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P God of the welcome table, in this meal we have feasted on your goodness and have been united by your presence among us. Empower us to go forth sustained by these gifts so that we may share your neighborly love with all, through Jesus Christ, the giver of abundant life.

C Amen.

* **BLESSING**

P May the truth which makes us free, the hope that never dies, and the love which casts out fear, visit us and redeem us, till the day-spring breaks and the shadows flee away.

C Amen.

* **CLOSING SONG: MY FEET ARE ON THE ROCK!**

**Ooh ooh, ooh ooh. . . ooh ooh, ooh ooh
I can see the clouds roll in. I can feel the winds, they try to shake me.
I will not be moved. . . my feet are on the Rock!**

I can feel the waters rise.

I can hear the howling lies that haunt me.

Fear won't hold me now. . . my feet are on the Rock!

CHORUS:

**When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.
Let the waters come and the earth give way,
I'll be dancing in the rain. . . my feet are on the Rock!
Ooh ooh, ooh ooh. . . ooh ooh, ooh ooh (2nd TIME TO BRIDGE)**

**I can see the morning light. I can feel the joy on the horizon,
Here my faith is found. . . I stand on solid ground. CHORUS**

BRIDGE [Sing 3 times]

**On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand,
So stomp you feet and clap your hands, our feet are on the Rock.**

LAST CHORUS

**When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling you Your unchanging grace.
Let the waters come and the earth give way, I'll be dancing in the rain. . .
When I feel my hope about to break, I will cling to Your unchanging grace.
Let the waters come and the earth give way, I'll be dancing in the rain. . .
My feet are on the Rock! Ooh ooh,
My feet are on the Rock! Ooh ooh,
My feet are on the Rock!**

CCLI Song #7106247 Words and Music by Abbie Parker, Josh Bronleewe, Lindsey Sweat, and Matthew Hein
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* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. Live your faith.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

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USHERS: Bethany Guthmann; Sandy Cherniss; Fay, Timothy & Thomas Ulbricht
LAY READER: Caylie Neisner
ALTAR GUILD: Loraine Gast

WELCOME: Welcome to this opportunity to worship our loving and life-giving God! "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

Congratulations to T.J. and Megan Ross on the birth of their daughter Willow Mae Ross. Willow Mae was born Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at 12:13 PM. She weighed 8 lbs. 1 oz. and was 19 ¾ inches long. She is welcomed home by big brother Bame Edward.

Congratulations to Bill and Rhanda Lattimore on the birth of their seventh grandchild! Felicity Jade Kanz was born Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 9:58 AM to Luke and Kelly (Lattimore) Kanz in Lubbock, Texas. Felicity Jade weighed 9 lbs. 6 oz. and was 21 inches long. She is welcomed home by big brother Judah William. Proud great-grandparents for the eighth time are Adrian & Virginia Fritsch.

COLLECTION OF OFFERING: Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes "Power of One" dollars.

Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses: \$8,405.00

Attendance: Aug. 15 & 16, 2020 – 64 **Contributions:** Aug. 15 & 16 – \$15,288.15
Power of One: Aug. 15 & 16, 2020 – \$16.00 **Campaign Fund:** Aug. 15 & 16 - \$300.00

Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.

ATTENTION: *Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.*

♦ **GLUTEN-FREE WAFERS:** For those who are allergic to gluten, we will have a few gluten-free wafers available at communion. Please tell Pastor when coming forward, "Gluten-free, please."

** **NOTICE REGARDING BULLETINS:** Please take your bulletin home after worship. If you do not wish to take your bulletin home, please place it in the recycling container after worship. We will **not** be reusing them. Thank you! **

► **Noon Bible Study:** The **Noon Bible Study group** that usually meets on Tuesdays will resume meeting on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 at 12:00 PM in the **church library.**

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Wed., Aug. 26 – 9:00 AM – CCC Chapel
2:00 PM – Chapel Online
Thurs., Aug. 27 – 6:00 PM – Building Assessment Team
Sat., Aug. 29 – 7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship
Next Sun., Aug. 30 – 9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship
10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School (fellowship hall)
11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Monday, August 24, 2020 Bartholomew, Apostle

Mentioned as one of Jesus' disciples in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Bartholomew's name is replaced in John's gospel by Nathanael, leading many to believe that the two are different names for the same person. Little is known about his work, though some traditions place him later in India or Armenia.

Friday, August 28, 2020 Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, died 430

Augustine was one of the greatest theologians of the Western church. A native of North Africa, he recovered from a debauched young adulthood through the influence of his mother, Monica, and Bishop Ambrose of Milan. Besides writing influential theological books, he served as bishop of Hippo, in present-day Algeria.

Friday, August 28, 2020 Moses the Black, monk, martyr, died around 400

Converted from life as a thief and a robber to Christianity, Moses was an Ethiopian who became a desert monk at Skete. The change in his heart and life had a profound impact on his native country. He was murdered when Berber bandits attacked his monastery.

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OTHER READINGS: Isaiah 51:1-6

Just as God had called Abraham and Sarah and given them many descendants, so now God offers comfort to Zion. God's deliverance will come soon and will never end.

The reading begins:

¹Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. ²Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many. ³For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. ⁴Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. ⁵I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. ⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a

garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

PSALM: Psalm 138

¹I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I will sing your praise. ²I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name, because of your steadfast love and faithfulness; for you have glorified your name and your word above all things. ³When I called, you answered me; you increased my strength within me. ⁴All the rulers of the earth will praise you, O LORD, when they have heard the words of your mouth. ⁵They will sing of the ways of the LORD, that great is the glory of the LORD. ⁶The LORD is high, yet cares for the lowly, perceiving the haughty from afar. ⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe; you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies; your right hand shall save me. ⁸You will make good your purpose for me; O LORD, your steadfast love endures forever; do not abandon the works of your hands.

OTHER READINGS: Romans 12:1-8

In response to God's merciful activity, we are to worship by living holistic, God-pleasing lives. Our values and viewpoints are not molded by the time in which we live but are transformed by the Spirit's renewing work. God's grace empowers different forms of service among Christians, but all forms of ministry function to build up the body of Christ.

The reading begins:

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

SERVICE OVERVIEW: CONFESSING CHRIST, FORMED IN FAITH

In late August, students are preparing to go back to school, and many churches gear up for a new year of Christian education. It is a good time to be reminded of the heart of Christian formation: conformation and transformation.

Disciples are formed over time — shaped by learning, worship, and all aspects of Christian life in community. As it was for Peter, part of our faith formation is learning to confess Jesus as the Messiah, not only with the right words but also through an experience of the Living God in Christ. And along with Peter, through such formation we also discover who we are in relation to God:

After Peter “confesses” Jesus’ identity of Messiah, Jesus “confesses” Peter’s identity by calling out his name and vocation.

Traditionally, Lutheran worship contains two confessions which keep forming us: a confession of sin and a confession of faith. In the first, we acknowledge who we are as sinner and saint, and in the second, we acknowledge who God is in the mystery of the Trinity. Like Peter’s, our own identity is revealed in those truths. And, we might say, we are continually formed by and through them.

Peter’s confession is not a precondition for following Jesus; it comes in the middle of his journey of discipleship. Our formation too is a long process — lifelong, in fact — which begins at baptism (or even before!) and is guided by those who travel before and with us. At this time of year, as we explore our own formation, identity, and vocation as disciples of Jesus, Isaiah entreats us, “Look to the rock from which you were hewn.” Envisioning Peter “the rock,” we might also consider how our shape is a “chip off the old block” of our forebears in faith.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Today, we hear that Peter received the “keys of the kingdom.” In our baptism, we too have received keys that open God to us and open ourselves to others. We join Peter to acclaim Jesus as Son of God. Welcome to worship! Be opened to the word and be welcomed at the table.

Peter is usually depicted holding a set of huge keys which are the “keys of the kingdom.” Keys and locks actually date back some six thousand years. They have been made of wood, iron, steel, and more. It’s not just that keys and locks are meant to provide safety and security, though. Keys provide access to something of value. These metaphorical keys Peter receives open to us the heart of a forgiving God. We are also given the keys to the kingdom at our baptism.

Peter makes his powerful confession, and Jesus praises him saying, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.” This is a reminder that faith is a gift given to humans by a loving and gracious God. Peter does not believe because he is smart, insightful, or courageous. Peter comes to faith because God has blessed him with this gift. It is a humbling reminder of the one who is the giver of good gifts. It is the difference between saying, “*Thank you*” and saying, “*I give thanks to God for you.*” What gift was given to you as a blessing by God?

Before Jesus’ death and resurrection, we hear Peter’s confession: “*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*” Jesus tells us that it is upon “this rock,” the rock of faith, that the church will be built. Rocks provide a solid foundation. What’s interesting, and sometimes challenging about the rock of faith, is that it changes as we change. We grow up and navigate our faith as it matures and grows. How we understand God, faith, community, and church will change. Think about how your faith changed since your confirmation or since you joined the church. What kind of changes would others notice about you? What kind of changes do you see in yourself?

It is challenging to face the problems of the church and the wider society. Christ is the rock who is our foundation, and as Christians *we are the house in which God lives!* Resist being conformed to the values of this world. Instead, transform the world by the Spirit of Christ. Who do *you* say Jesus is?

KID STUDY:

Even though people listened to Jesus teach and preach, and saw him heal people who were sick, they were still confused about who Jesus really was. Some people thought he was John the Baptist. Some people thought he was Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. One day, Jesus asked the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

Peter got it right! There are still many people who don't know who Jesus is. They might say he was a great teacher or that he was a great religious leader, but what they don't know is that Jesus is the Christ – the Son of God.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Peter, who before was called Simon, receives from the Lord the name of Peter, because of the strength and constancy of his faith; for with a firm and tenacious soul he clung to him of whom it was written, "And the rock was Christ." And this rock, that is, the Lord Savior, who gave to him who knew him, loved him, and confessed him, the privilege of sharing his name, said that he would be called Peter, from Petra (the rock), upon which the church is built. For only through the faith and the love of Christ, through receiving the sacraments of Christ, through keeping the commandments of Christ, can we come to share in the lot of the elect and to eternal life. - Bede [Bede, in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers, III, 273.]

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Next Week's Theme (Aug. 29 & 30): Get behind me Satan – Peter rebukes Jesus

Next Week's Scriptures (Aug. 29 & 30):

First Reading: Jeremiah 15:15-21
"God fortifies the prophet against opposition."

Psalm: Psalm 26:1-8
"Your love is before my eyes; I have walked faithfully with you." (Ps. 26:3)

Second Reading: Romans 12:9-21
"Live in harmony."

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-28
"The passion prediction and rebuke to Peter."