Digital Bulletin September 13, 2026
Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Lessons in Leadership: Grace

GATHERING

WELCOME Dawn Brock-Jones

PRELUDE

THRESHOLD TO WORSHIP Rev. Nancy Nichols

THRESHOLD SONG UMH #393 *Spirit of the Living God*
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on us.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on us.
Melt us, mold us, fill us, use us.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on us.

+CALL TO WORSHIP
Followers of Christ, we live in a world where we hurt one another, where sin divides us one from another and makes us enemies instead of neighbors.
Yet we are a people of grace, called by Christ to forgive and repair the rifts between us.

The divisions in our world seem like too much to overcome, and we wonder if this forgiveness thing really works anymore. Maybe it worked for Jesus, but not for us.
Yet we are a people of grace, called by Christ to forgive and repair the rifts between us.

We find ourselves tempted by easy answers and quick solutions, reticent to do the slow and difficult work of reconciliation.
Yet we are a people of grace, called by Christ to forgive and repair the rifts between us.

In this place, may we encounter Christ who meets us in the places where we want to give up, where we despair that life-giving change is even possible, with abundant grace to sustain us on the journey.
God, form us today as people of grace, called by Christ to forgive and repair the rifts between us. Amen.

+OPENING HYMN UMH #66 *Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven*
Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to the throne thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore God's praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.

Praise the Lord for grace and favor
to all people in distress;
praise God, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glorious now God's faithfulness.

Father-like, God tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame God knows;

mother-like, God gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Widely yet God's mercy flows.

Angels in the heights, adoring,
you behold God face to face;
saints triumphant, now adoring,
gathered in from every race.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.

OPENING PRAYER
The Lord be with you
And also with you
Let us pray:
Liberating God, we worship you.
We praise you for delivering your people of old from enslavement in Egypt
by opening up a new and unexpected future before them.

They experienced your grace and mercy in awesome and life-sustaining ways,
which must have been like an impossible dream coming true.
Through these acts, you showed your compassion
for the weak and powerless of this world.

We praise and adore you for opening up a new future for us
when your love and compassion, your mercy and grace
became enfleshed in Jesus Christ.

He delivered us from the bondage of evil and sin through his death on the cross.
The impossible once more became reality
when love defeated evil once and for all.

We pray that this time of worship will be a true offering
of our wonder and praise
that you should care for us so deeply and so faithfully.
This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

FIRST LESSON *Exodus 14:19-31* Cindy Grabill

The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down on the Egyptian army and threw the Egyptian army into a panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

PSALTER UMH #835 *Psalm 114*

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord.

When Israel went forth from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel God's dominion.
The sea looked and fled,
Jordan turned back.
The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

What ails you, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
O mountains, that you skip like rams?
O hills, like lambs?
Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
Who turns the rock into a pool of water,
the flint into a spring of water.
Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord.

SECOND LESSON *Romans 14:1-12* Cindy Grabill

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

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

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

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

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

So then, each one of us will be held accountable.

HYMN UMH #386 *Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown*

Come, O thou Traveler unknown,
whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
and I am left alone with thee.
With thee all night I mean to stay,
and wrestle till the break of day;
with thee all night I mean to stay,
and wrestle till the break of day.

I need not tell thee who I am,
my misery and sin declare;
thyself hast called me by my name,
look on thy hands and read it there.
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

Yield to me now, for I am weak,
but confident in self-despair!
Speak to my heart, in blessing speak,
be conquered by my instant prayer.
Speak, or thou never hence shalt move,
and tell me if thy name is Love.
Speak, or thou never hence shalt move,
and tell me if thy name is Love.

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me,
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
pure, Universal Love thou art.
To me, to all, thy mercies move;
thy nature and thy name is Love.
To me, to all, thy mercies move;
thy nature and thy name is Love.

CHILDREN'S TIME

+SINGING THE ALLELUIA! TFWS #2043 *Alleluia*

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

+GOSPEL *Matthew 18:21-35* Rev. Nancy Nichols

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

MUSICAL OFFERING *Amazing Grace* Trinity Choir
Arr. by John Ness Beck

THE MESSAGE "Lessons in Leadership: Grace"

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER

OFFERING
STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

OFFERTORY

+DOXOLOGY UMH #95

SENDING FORTH

CLOSING HYMN UMH #400 *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*
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! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of thy redeeming love.

Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I'm 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.

O 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, O take and seal it,
seal it for thy courts above.

BENEDICTION