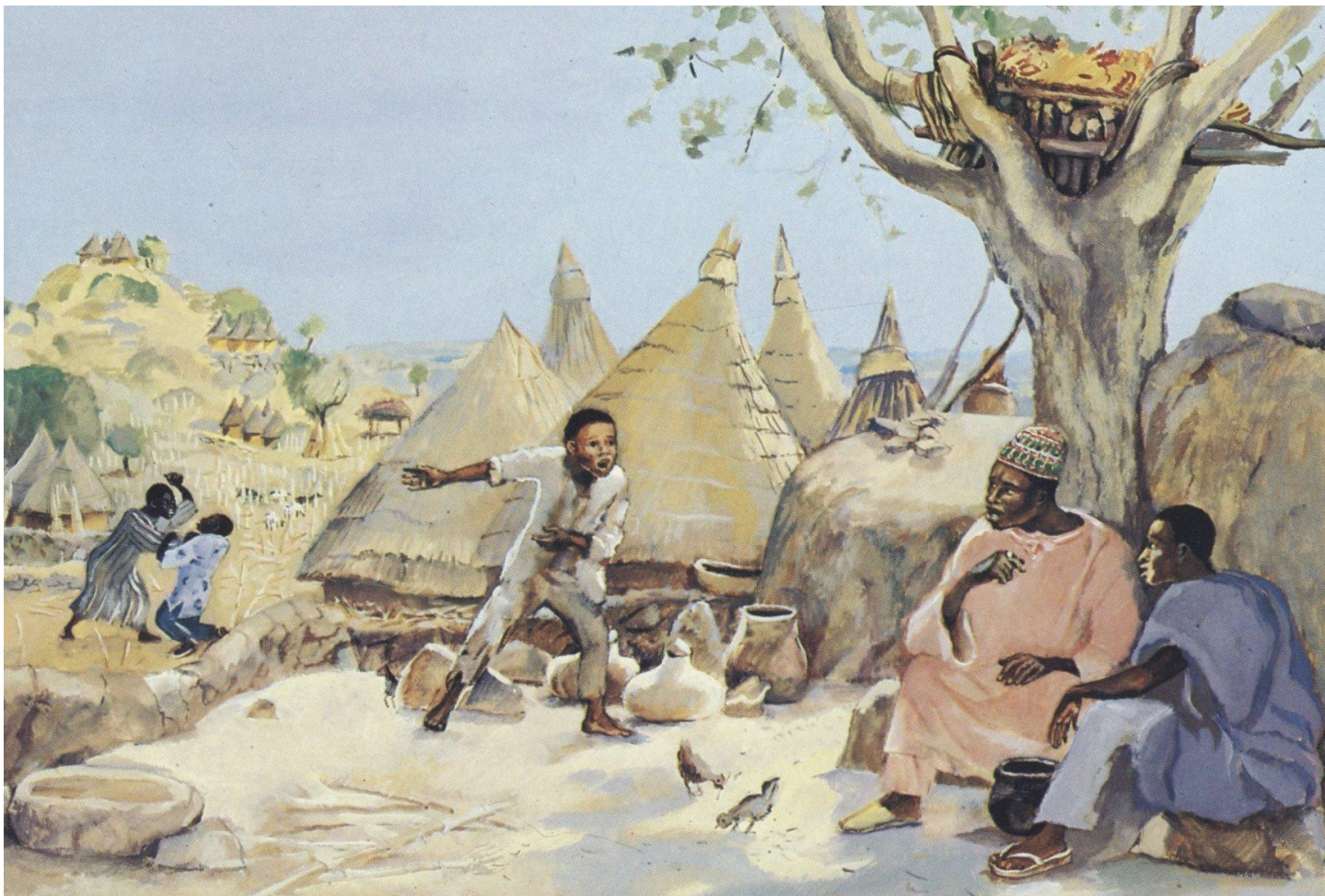




Title: The Unforgiving Servant (1973). Artist: JESUS MAFA.

16th Sunday after Pentecost
God's Work, Our Hands
Unity Service
September 13, 2026, 10:00 am



St. John's Lutheran Church

Salisbury, North Carolina

WELCOME TO ST. JOHN'S!

We are glad God has brought you here!

Wednesday Night Meals – Begin this Wed., Sept. 16 at 5:30 pm in Ritchie Hall. Dinner is served at 5:30 pm. Reservations are not needed. Visit our website for the menu and to purchase your season pass at stjohns-salisbury.org/Wednesdays. Immediately following, **Vespers in the Chapel at 6:15 pm.**

Order of St. John's Training – Sept. 20 from 12:30-2 pm in the Narthex. This event is for 6th and 9th graders to get introduced to the responsibilities of the Order of St. John's. Participants will receive training as acolytes, crucifers, banner bearers, and processionalists. Lunch is included.

3 and 4 yr Old Milestone “March with Thanksgiving” – Sept. 20 at 2 pm. Join Mrs. Stacey in the Ark. **RSVP by Sept. 14** to Stacey@stjohns-salisbury.org.

Become an Outreach Shepherd – Join us for training on **Sept. 20 at 2 pm in the Goodman Dining Hall.** Help share Christ's love by welcoming and connecting visitors to the life of St. John's. Contact Pastor James for more info at james@stjohns-salisbury.org.

Pictorial Photos – Additional Session Date – Sept. 21 – In order to provide an opportunity for those folks who have been out of town or for various other reasons, we have added an additional sign-up date. Reserve your appointment today using the QR code here, to be included in our Church Directory.



Bibles & Brew – Men's Ministry – Sept. 22 at 6 pm. Grove Cartel Brewing Co., 211 N. Main St., China Grove, NC.

Congregational Study – Sept. 23 at 6 pm in Ritchie Hall. Join us for an important conversation about who we are as a congregation, where we are today, and where God is leading us next, as we prepare to call a new pastor.

Men's Ministry Breakfast – Sept. 26 at 8:30 am in Ritchie Hall. Our guest speaker will be David Whisnant, retired news reporter with WBTV. Sign up today using the QR code here or call the church office.



Worship at the Lake – Sept. 27 at 9:27 am with a **Congregational Brunch starting at 10:30 am.** All are invited to join us at St. John's Retreat Property located at 220 Mockingbird Lane, Salisbury, NC. We will enjoy a peaceful morning of worship reflection and community – gathered together in the beauty of nature. Bring a chair and dish to share.

1st Grade Milestone “The Lord's Prayer” – Sept. 27 at 2 pm. Join Ms. Stacey in the Ark. **RSVP by Sept. 21** to Stacey@stjohns-salisbury.org.

Altar Flowers – Given to the Glory of God and in honor of the marriage of Kathryn Rusher and Dale Breeden on Sept. 12, 2026,
by the Rusher and Breeden families.



*The congregation is invited to respond where words are in **Bold**.
Hymns are found by number in the red worship books located in each pew.*

PRELUDE

'Little Brown Church' **Luther Ringers**

arr. Anna Laura Page

We rise and face the cross.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

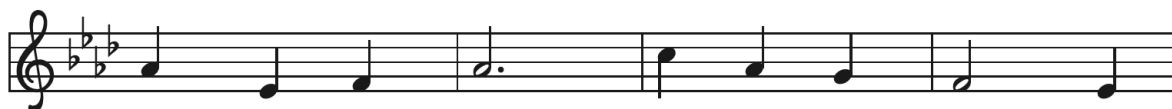
Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
who pours love into our hearts
and healing upon the earth. **Amen.**

Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith,
we confess our sin. *Silence is kept for reflection.*

Compassionate God,
**we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness
in the world and in our own hearts.**
Creation groans from overuse.
Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships.
Indifference keeps us from seeking justice.
Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love to others.
Turn our hearts back to you.
Restore our world and reconcile us to one another.
Renew us to live as your holy people,
following the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hear this good news:

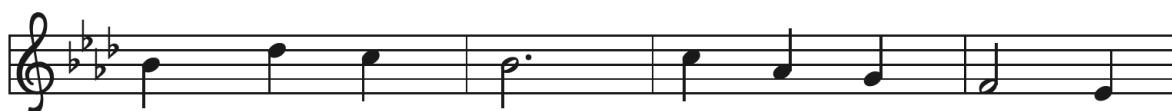
We have peace with God through ✠ Jesus Christ,
in whom there is no condemnation,
but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.
Receive freely this healing gift of grace. **Amen.**



1 God's work, our hands: work - ing to - geth - er,
 2 God's work, our feet: trav - 'ling to - geth - er,
 3 God's work, our voice: sing - ing to - geth - er,
 4 God is at work in and a - round us:



build - ing a fu - ture, re - pair - ing the world,
 fol - low - ing Je - sus to plac - es un - known,
 prais - ing, pro - claim - ing to all who will hear,
 seed - lings are sprout - ing and bread's on the rise!



rais - ing up homes, plant - ing new gar - dens,
 walk - ing as friends, march - ing for free - dom,
 pray - ing for peace, shout - ing for jus - tice,
 Washed and set free, hum - bled and hon - ored,



feed - ing the hun - gry and shelt - 'ring the cold.
 run - ning the race with God's fu - ture the goal.
 claim - ing God's love for the lost and the least.
 gift - ed by grace, we re - spond in God's love.



Bless, God, our hands as we work in your name,
 Bless, God, our feet as we fol - low your way,
 Bless, God, our voice as we speak in your name,
 Bless, God, our lives as we an - swer your call,



shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.
 shar - ing the good news of your gos - pel.

APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

SONG OF PRAISE

'Worthy of Worship'

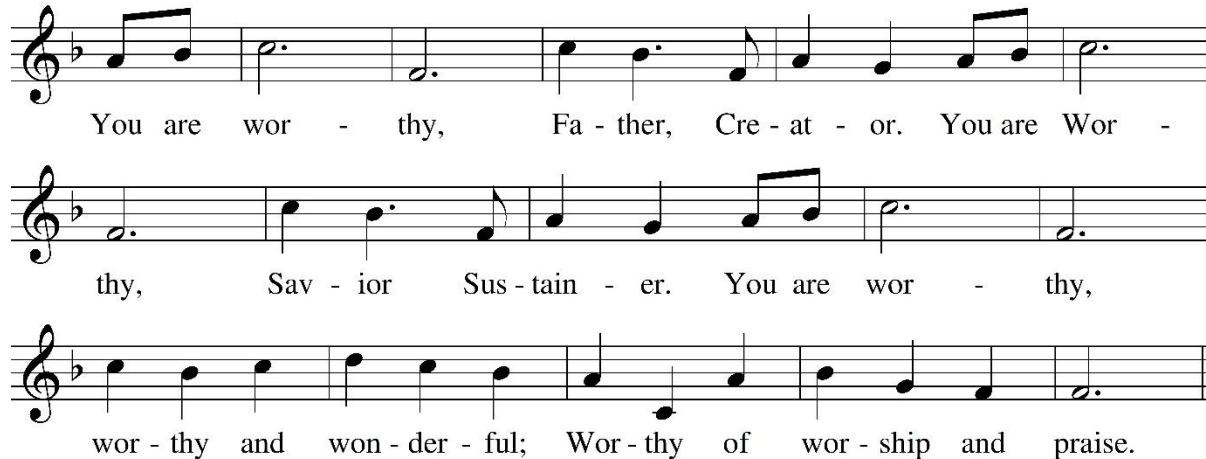
Music: Terry York
Text: Mark Blankenship

Cantor



1. Wor - thy of wor - ship, wor - thy of praise,
2. Wor - thy of rev - 'rence, wor - thy of fear,
3. Al - might - y Fa - ther, Mas - ter and Lord,
wor - thy of hon - or and glo - ry;
wor - thy of love and de - vo - tion;
King of all kings and Re - deem - er,
Wor - thy of all the glad songs we can sing,
Wor - thy of bow - ing and bend - ing of knees,
Won - der - ful Coun - se - lor, Com - fort - er, Friend,
wor - thy of all of the off - 'rings we bring.
wor - thy of all this and add - ed to these...
Sav - ior and Source of our life with - out end.

Congregation



You are wor - thy, Fa - ther, Cre - at - or. You are Wor -
thy, Sav - ior Sus - tain - er. You are wor - thy,
wor - thy and won - der - ful; Wor - thy of wor - ship and praise.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

We pray: O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Be seated.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Children ages 3 through 3rd grade are now invited to **Kingdom Kids**.
Children will return to the worship service after the sermon.*

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.



We rise.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 18:21-35



The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 18th chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

²¹ Peter came and said to [Jesus,] “Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

²³ “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ 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.’ ²⁹ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹ 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. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because

you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

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

Be seated.

SERMON

Pastor James Demmel

SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM



PRESENTATION

Baptismal family gathers at the font.

Amia Kaylee Welgemoed

Child of Joanita and Brenden Welgemoed

Baptismal Partner: *Emma Grace Charest*

The Congregation's Response:

People of God, do you promise to support Amia
and pray for her in her new life in Christ? **We do.**

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

People of God, do you believe in God the Father?

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

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

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.

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

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.

THANKSGIVING AT THE FONT

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We give you thanks, O God...unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

RITE OF BAPTISM

The Rite of Baptism includes three symbols used in baptismal liturgy since the beginning of the church: water (for cleansing), oil (for sealing), and light (for proclaiming).

Baptism with Water. Amia is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Imposition of Oil. Oil is used to make the sign of the cross on Amia's forehead, a symbol that seals her in relationship with Christ.

Gift of Light. Amia is welcomed into the Family of God. A candle (the light of Christ) is presented to her with the words, "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Let us welcome the newly baptized: **We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share: Join us in giving thanks and praise to God and bearing God's creative redeeming Word to all the world.**

As Amia is introduced to the congregation; all are invited to sing:

BAPTISMAL SONG

Jesus Loves Me'

ELW 595

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so;
little ones to him belong, they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain: Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me,
yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! He who died, heaven's gates to open wide;
he will wash away my sin, let his little child come in. Refrain

PEACE

Share the 'peace' of Christ with one another.
The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

Be seated.

OFFERING AND ANTHEM

'Hands of God'

Michael Austin Miller

*We gather around the water, the word, the wine, the wheat.
Repentant and forgiven, from bondage we are freed.
Singing songs of gladness, of mercy, grace, and love,
then we are sent from this place to be the hands of God.*

*Baptized in the water and nurtured by the word,
then fed at the table where bread and wine are served.
Blessed to be a blessing with strength to heed the call,
we are sent from this place to be the hands of God.*

*Hands of God, hands of faith, offering hope, offering grace.
Hands of blessing, hands of love; we are the hands, the hands of God.*

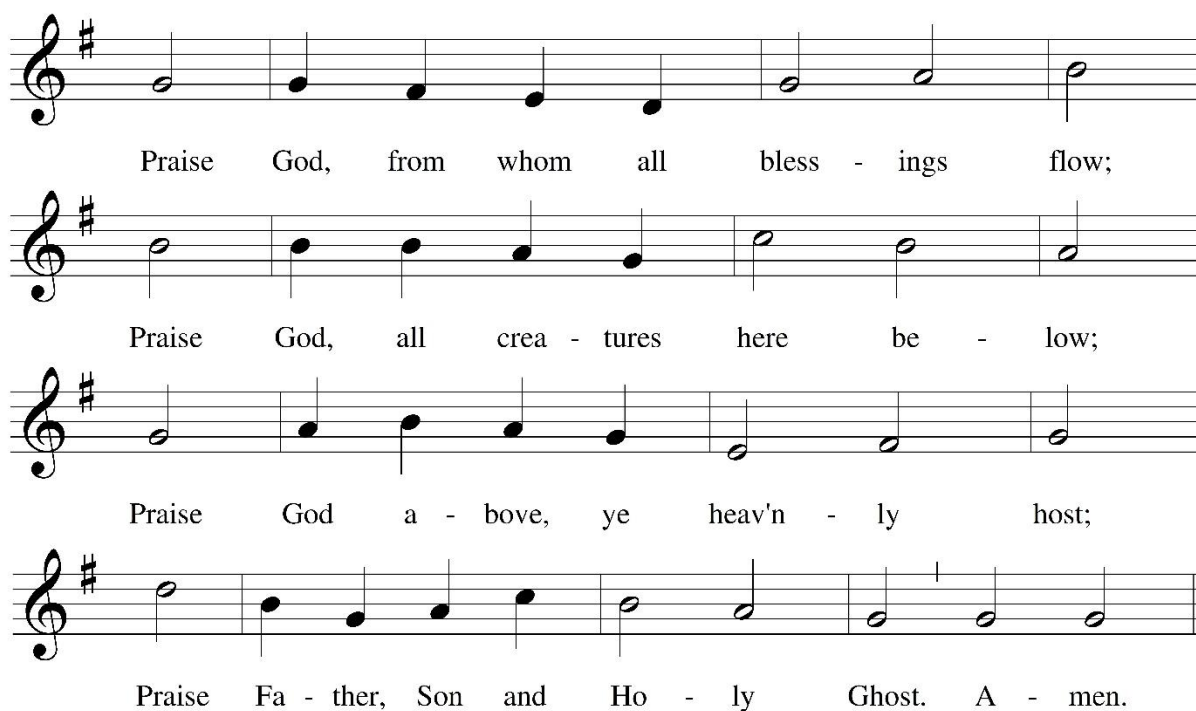
*From every land and nation, every tribe and every tongue,
united by the spirit, in Christ we join as one
with Saints who've gone before us, whose spirits still live on,
then we are sent from this place to be the hands of God.*

*If we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
the righteous One is by our side, the One of God's own choosing.*

*Hands of God (offering blessing), hands of faith (offering love),
offering hope (hands of God), offering grace (hands of faith),
Hands of blessing (hands of hope), hands of love (hands of grace)
we are the hands (we are the hands) the hands of God.*

We rise.

RESPONSE AND PRAYER



Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow;

Praise God, all crea - tures here be - low;

Praise God a - bove, ye heav'n - ly host;

Praise Fa - ther, Son and Ho - ly Ghost. A - men.

We pray: Holy God, giver of all good things, receive the gifts we bring, fruit of the earth and the work of human hands, that they may be used to your purposes for life and love in the world.
Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.



THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE AND HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
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 all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

The musical score is written on six staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like, using a soprano clef. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The score concludes with a double bar line on the final staff.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and
God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your
glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.
Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the
Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Honor, praise, glory and thanksgiving to you, God, our loving Creator.

In the beginning you reached your hands into the earth and formed humanity in your own image. You breathed into us the breath of love and gave us hearts and hands and voices to live your loving purpose in the world.

Seeing the lonely creature of earth, you created a partner that we would know the joy of community. Throughout the history of your people, you never abandoned us, but brought us into community with one another and with you, and guided us through your prophets. With endless patience and love, you called to us time and again to return to life with you.

In the fulfillment of all things, you came to us in Jesus, born into a human family, raised in a hometown, who gathered around himself a community formed by your love, and yearned to gather all your people

Sitting at dinner with friends and knowing one among them would break the bonds of love, our Lord Jesus took bread and 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.

In the same way 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 sins. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Trusting in his promise to be among us whenever we gather in his name, we proclaim the mystery of faith: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Gathered as your people, meeting in Jesus' name, and preparing ourselves to feast upon Jesus' very body and blood, we plead with all creation: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

Send your Spirit upon this meal, the body and blood of Jesus, that we overflow with your selfless love. Turn us to face our neighbors, that by us and through us your love may be known in the world. Again, we beg: **Come, Holy Spirit.**

All honor and praise and glory to you, God of creative, God of holy, God who strengthens and guides our hands, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, we pray as Jesus taught us: **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

Come, Christ invites you to this table.
Thanks be to God.

Be seated.

DISTRIBUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

All baptized Christians are welcome to receive Communion at the altar. Please follow the usher's guidance. At the altar, bread is served (gluten-free by request), followed by wine (grape juice by request). Those not receiving Communion are invited forward to receive a blessing (crossing your arms across your chest as a sign to the pastor). If you need Communion brought to you, please signal the servers when they come down from the chancel.

COMMUNION HYMN

Be known to us, Lord Je - sus, in the break - ing of the bread.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Be known to us, Lord Je - sus, in the break - ing of the bread.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

COMMUNION SONG

'Jesus Paid It All'
by Nifong, Hall, Grape

9:27 Worship Team

Refrain

Spir-it, o - pen my heart to the joy and pain of
 liv-ing. As you love may I love, in re - ceiv - ing
 and in giv - ing. Spir - it, o - pen my heart.

1 God, re - place my ston - y heart with a heart that's
 2 Write your love up - on my heart as my law, my
 3 May I weep with those who weep; share the joy of

kind and ten - der. All my cold - ness and
 goal, my sto - ry. In each thought, word, and
 friend and neigh - bor. As I live from day to

Refrain

fear to your grace I now sur - ren - der.
 deed, may my liv - ing bring you glo - ry.
 day, love will be my fin - est la - bor.

We rise.

COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you
 and keep you in His grace. **Amen.**

We pray: Holy Jesus, in this meal you have fed and nourished us to work in your beloved world.
 Send us now, filled with yourself and strengthened by your Spirit to live your love for others.
Amen.

SENDING

Forgiven and nourished, we are now sent into the world to share God's love.



BLESSING

God who sets forth the law of love, Jesus who fulfills the law for you, and the Spirit through whom you are called to love, ☩ bless you this day, that you may be God's hands and heart and voice at work in the world. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN 'Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service' ELW 712

DISMISSAL AND POSTLUDE

Go in peace.
You are God's hands at work in the world!
Thanks be to God.

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Preacher.....Pastor James Demmel
Presider.....Pastor Dan Joyner Miller

ORDER OF ST. JOHN'S

Acolytes.....Jackson Williams and Paige Marino
Crucifer.....William Charest
Banner Bearer.....Carson Marino

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ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

200 West Innes Street, Salisbury, North Carolina 28144 | 704.636.3431
stjohns-salisbury.org | To contact a staff member: *first-name*@stjohns-salisbury.org

Pastoral Ministry

Senior Pastor.....Dan Joyner Miller...ext. 2060
Pastor for Congregational CareLori Carter...ext. 2050
Pastor for Youth and OutreachJames Demmel...ext. 2040

Worship and Music Ministry

Pastor for Worship and the Arts.....Spence Robertson...ext. 2080
Production Manager.....Taylor Hutchins...ext. 2190
Associate Parish Musician.....Janie Rollins
Contemporary Worship Leaders.....Michael Board and Ondria Witt
Director of Music *emeritus*.....Karl Kinard, Jr., *deacon*
Director of Worship and the Arts *emeritus*.....Robert J. Durocher, Jr., *deacon*

Program Ministry

Children.....Stacey Shafer...ext. 2020
St. John's Kindergarten (4 & 5 year olds), Director.....Bonita Rowland...ext. 2120
Child Development Center, Executive Director.....Lea Anne Thomas...ext. 3212

Administrative Team

Church Administrator.....Deborah Cross...ext. 2030
Office Manager.....Vivian Connor...ext. 2000
Bookkeeper.....Mark Bias...ext. 2170
Communication Specialist.....Stephanie Mesimer...ext. 2220
Facility Manager.....David Ellenburg...ext. 2070
Custodian.....Steven Elliott



Let's connect faith and life. *Together.*