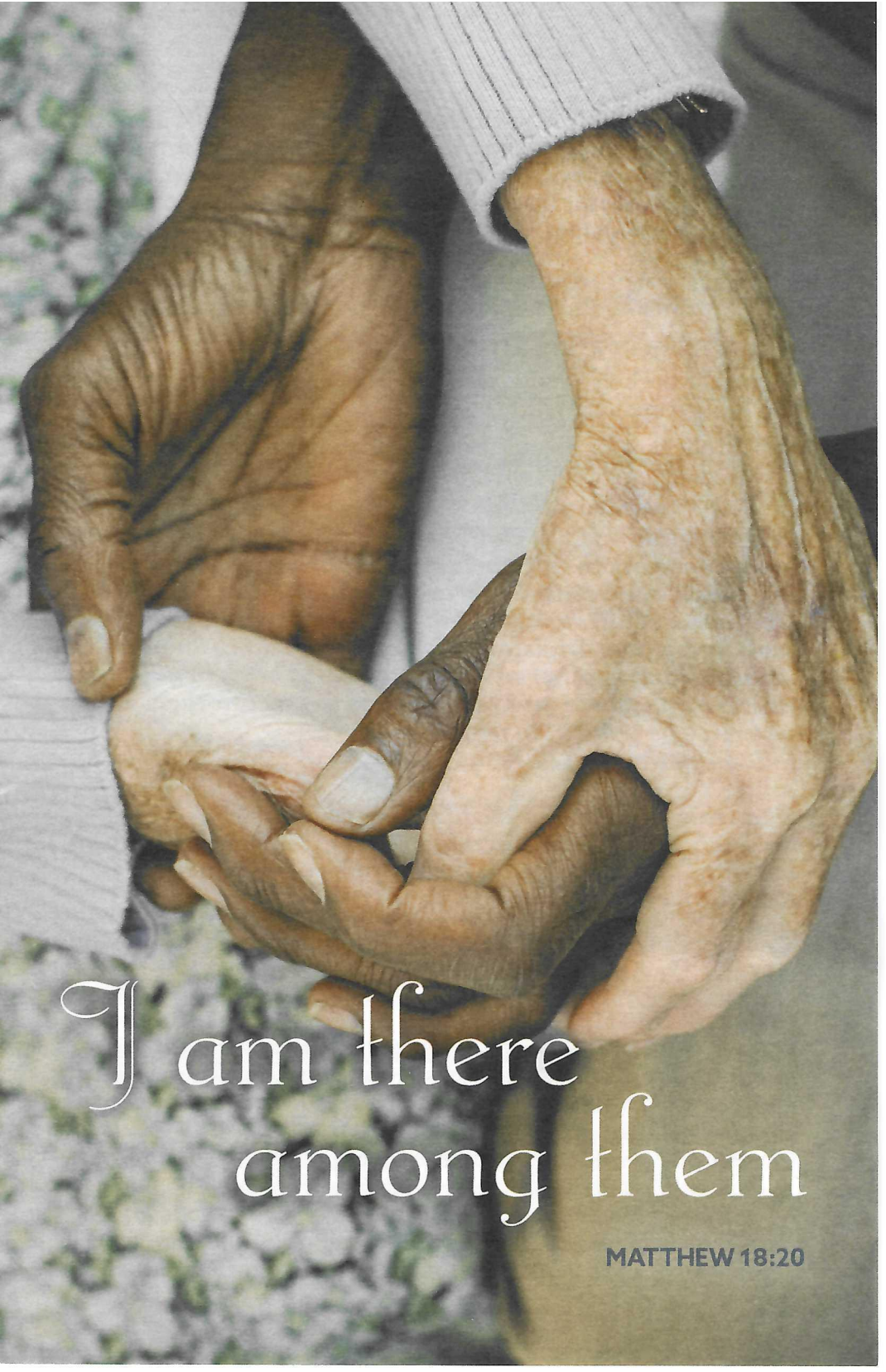




I am there
among them

MATTHEW 18:20

FRIEDENS LUTHERAN CHURCH

15th Sunday After Pentecost ✠ September 6, 2026

*Indicates for the congregation to stand if you are able.

Congregation responses are printed in **bold print**.

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS and PRELUDE

***CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

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, let us confess our sin.

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.

*HYMN "Shall We Gather at the River" P. 30

*PRAYER OF THE DAY (Spoken)

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

*HYMN OF PRAISE "Praise to the Father" (Sung)

Praise to the Father for his loving kindness, Tenderly caring for his erring children; Praise him, all angels; praise him in the heaven; Praise to the Father!

First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-11

⁷ So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life. ¹⁰ Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel: Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" ¹¹ Say to them: As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

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

PSALM: 119:33-40

³³ Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end.

³⁴ ***Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching; I shall keep it with all my heart.***

³⁵ Lead me in the path of your commandments, for that is my desire.

³⁶ ***Incline my heart to your decrees and not to unjust gain.***

³⁷ Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood; give me life in your way.

³⁸ ***Fulfill your promise to your servant, which is for those who fear you.***

³⁹ Turn away the reproach that I dread, because your judgements are good.

⁴⁰ ***Behold, I long for your commandments; by your righteousness enliven me.***

Second Reading: Romans 13:8-14

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
The Word of the Lord. ***Thanks be to God.***

***GOSPEL:** Matthew 18:15-20

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew. ***Glory to you, O Lord.***

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. ¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

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

CHILDREN'S AND CONGREGATIONAL MESSAGE – Pastor Barry Spatz.

HYMN "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" P. 59

PRAYERS** Hear us, O God. ***Your mercy is great.

***APOSTLES' CREED**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

***SHARING OF THE PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always. ***And also with you.***

OFFERING/OFFERTORY

***DOXOLOGY**

(Sung)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, praise him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

(Spoken)

The Lord be with you. ***And also with you.*** Lift your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

***PREFACE**

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY"

(Spoken)

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

***WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

***LORD'S PRAYER**

(Spoken)

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.

HOLY COMMUNION

*COMMUNION PRAYER

Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

*BLESSING

*CLOSING HYMN "Standing on the Promises" P. 30

*DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

POSTLUDE

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I am among them. Matthew 18:20

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Council President: Ed Tietsworth, (570) 292-1061

Calendar

September 13, 2026 – Janet and Ron Radel, Harvest Home Sunday.

September 20, 2026 - Pastor Barry Spatz.

September 27, 2026 - Damaris Merwine

October 4, 2026 – Pastor Barry Spatz with Holy Communion.

Announcements

September 9, 2026 – Bible Study, The Chosen, Pastor Barry. 6:30 PM
viewing episode 1 of Season 1. Various scripture passages will be discussed
and snacks will be provided.

September 13, 2026 – Harvest Home Sunday with auction and luncheon
after the service.

September 14, 2026 – WELCA mtg, 6:00 PM.

September 19, 2026 – Craft Faire, Hegins Park.

October 3, 2026 – Fall Bazaar.

Prayer Corner

Rick Herring; Terry Schwartz; Saralinn & Joe Grantz; Linda & Lee Kiefer;
Daniel & Mary Carl; Joan Smith; Judy Huntzinger; Melody Schwartz; Tim
Kopenhagen; Ryan Deiter; Linda Sanders.

Today's Leaders – Service, Pastor Barry Spatz Lector, Lisa Maurer
Lay Assistant, Jess Henninger Counters, Sue & Mike Deiter Head
Usher, Rick Herring Ushers, Rodney Troutman, Ben Wetzels, Jason
Wolfgang.

Flowers – In memory of Rick Kline's birthday.

Bulletin – In honor of Damaris's birthday, by XXXXXX

Attendance: 43 (8/30/26) Offering:

Current \$1,410.00

Other \$70.00

Total \$1,520.00

Weekly Offering Needed: \$2,362.87

Leaders, 9/13/2026 – Service, Janet & Ron Radel Organist, Harold
Morgan Lector, Scott Deiter Counters Janet & Ron Radel Head
Usher, Rick Herring Ushers, Larry Kling, AJ Kline, Ann Miller.

Community Is Complicated

Navigating life with other humans is not always easy. We who call ourselves the church likely know this all too well. Perhaps you've witnessed church council meetings gone awry, frustrating conversations about the budget, or intense disagreements over worship styles. Maybe your faith community has had to navigate conflicting visions for mission and outreach, welcome and hospitality, or diversity and justice. Maybe the generational or political divides in your community feel like rifts too big to cross. As the church, we are called to wrestle with difficult questions about faith and life, but at times, even with the best of intentions, we leave one another feeling hurt, overlooked, or misunderstood.

Jesus knew a thing or two about life in community. He knew what it was like to be betrayed by the ones he loved. He shared meals with people of different backgrounds, people whose identities at times put them at odds with one another. Even his disciples never quite seemed to be on the same page! Yet Jesus knew that despite the complexity of these situations, faith is best practiced in community. Accompanying one another, sharing one another's burdens, encouraging one another, forgiving one another, and holding each other accountable are vital to the Christian life.

Therefore, managing conflict is not something to be taken lightly. Disagreements are not to be just swept under the rug, ignored until the next issue emerges. We are instead called to embrace truth-telling, courage, accountability, and compassion in our dealings with one another. The work of conflict resolution is not easy or glamorous. In fact, it can be awkward and downright painful. But it is holy work. And by God's grace, it can be an invitation to build a community that more truly reflects God's love poured out for the whole world.