

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

September 6, 2026 10:30 AM

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.

1 Corinthians 15:58

"Our Labor of Love in Christ!"

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

Church Office: (704) 462-1035 email: gracenalcnewton@aol.com

www.gracelutheran-newton.org

Rev. Doug Hefner cell: (980) 234-8848 email: pastorhefner@aol.com

Sandi Tallant – Organist Todd Childers – Administrative Assistant

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 8am to 12pm

WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP at Grace Church this morning as we gather to worship the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit in truth. As you entered the sanctuary today, you received this bulletin containing the order for worship and announcements. Please also notice the Prayer List where you will find a listing of all the known prayer concerns. You are invited to use this as a guide for your personal prayers throughout the coming week. If you need information about our congregation or if you'd like to update your information, make sure to fill out the yellow Worship Today Form and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. If you have a prayer concern, indicate that on your Worship Today Form at the bottom or on the reverse side. If you are seeking a Church Home or would like more information about Grace, please contact Pastor Doug (980) 234-8848.

**Stand Hymnals in Pew Rack: LBW = Green WOV = Blue TCH = Burgundy*

PRELUDE *Please observe silence for meditation and prayer.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

***INVOCATION**

We gather to worship and praise God in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

God said, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord."

Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,

And I will give you rest."

We come in the name of the Spirit, resting from our labors,

Let us worship God this day!

***A LABOR DAY LITANY**

O Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, on this Labor Day weekend, we thank you for your care and loving concern for workers of all ages throughout the world. Your finished work of salvation on the cross has given us new life and a new calling to join You in a holy labor of love to bless others.

For workers who face dangerous conditions or hazards in their work, we pray for safety; we pray for protection for first responders, police, and our military,

Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, hear our prayer.

For all those who face the conflicts of working and caring for family and children without adequate support,

Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, hear our prayer.

For all workers who cannot find work and for whom unemployment assistance is not available,

Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, hear our prayer.

For workers who are entering the workforce or are in training or preparing for a vocation through education, grant them Your help and steadfastness.

Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, hear our prayer.

For workers who have retired or about to retire, grant them joy in their life's work and prepare them for new ways of using their gifts to bless others.

Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, hear our prayer.

For all workers whose work is taken for granted, is unappreciated or lacks meaning; may they find inspiration and encouragement as they remember Colossians 3:23-24 *“Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 24 Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ!”*

Jesus, worker and carpenter from Nazareth, hear our prayer.

Amen.

* **GATHERING HYMN** **“What a Fellowship (Leaning on the Everlasting Arms)”**
WOV 780

* **GREETING**

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

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Gracious God, you are the source of all wisdom and purpose, you are the blessing of those who labor. Be with us in our labor to guide and govern our world. Give all men and women work that enhances human dignity and bonds us to one another. Give us pride in our work, a fair return for our labor, and joy in knowing that our work finds its source in you. Chiefly we are grateful for the finished work of your Son our Lord Jesus who won for us salvation through his labor of love upon the cross, his death and resurrection. May our labor always be done in the name of and in the love and power of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: St. Paul's Letter to Philemon 1-21

¹Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ²and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. ⁸Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you — I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus — ¹⁰I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹(Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹²I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother — especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it — to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: Thanks be to God

SECOND READING: Colossians 3: 12-17, 22-24

¹²Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. ¹⁶Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with

thankful hearts. ¹⁷ *And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything you do. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. Serve them sincerely because of your reverent fear of the Lord. ²³ *Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.* ²⁴ *Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.*

L: The Word of the Lord. C: Thanks be to God

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

“Alleluia, Lord to Whom Shall We Go”



***GOSPEL: Matthew 20: 1-16**

P: The holy gospel according to St. Matthew. C: Glory to you, O Lord.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; ⁴ and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o’clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o’clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ ⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ ⁹ When those hired about five o’clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to

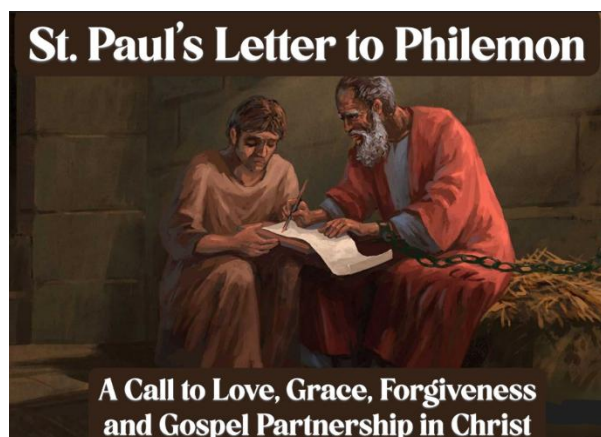
us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

L: The Gospel of the Lord. C: Praise to You O Christ!

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

SERMON



“Labor Day Message: Being ‘Useful’ in Our Work of Faith and Labor of Love in Christ!” - Pastor Doug

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 ² We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

“Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love”

WOV 765

***THE 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.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Response at the end of each petition. P: Lord in your mercy, **C: Hear our prayer.**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

Worshippers may greet one another with “the Peace of Christ.”

The assembly may be seated.

*** OFFERING In response to God’s blessings, we offer our tithes to the Lord**
HOLY COMMUNION – MEAL OF GRACE

*** OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Generous and loving God, on this Labor Day weekend, we bring before You the work of our hands and the offering of our hearts. We thank You for the skills, talents, and opportunities You have given us to serve others through our labor. As we present these gifts, we remember that all we have and all we are come from You. Bless these offerings, that they may be used to build Your kingdom, bring justice to the oppressed, and hope to the weary. May our work, our labor of love—whether in the home, in the field, in the office, or in the community—be an act of worship that honors You as we come to Your table of grace to be nourished in Your love and presence through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

***DIALOGUE**

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

*** WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The Gifts of God for the People of God. **C: Thanks be to God!**

The assembly may be seated.

All are invited to receive Holy Communion

COMMUNION SONG

Lamb of God



The musical score is written on four staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; grant us peace." The melody is simple and hymn-like, with a final cadence on the word "peace".

The congregation is invited to stand.

* COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER

P: Lord of the harvest, as we have shared in this holy meal, remind us that in Christ's body we are one people, called to serve with humility and love. Strengthen us for the work ahead, that we may labor not for earthly reward alone, but for the joy of serving You and our neighbor. Send us out from this table renewed in spirit, ready to be Your hands and feet in the world; through Christ, who is both our rest and our strength, we pray. **C: Amen.**

* BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. **C: Amen.**

*SENDING HYMN

"Blessed Assurance"

WOV 699

*DISMISSAL

P: May our labor of love in the Lord Jesus glorify Him and bless others as we go in peace and joy to love others in Jesus' name! **C: Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Glenda Childers by Todd Childers.



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffrey Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane Moss, Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Alice Parris, Todd Setzer, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, and Nancy Willis.

Nursing Home: Juanita Haas (Trinity Village), Ted Whisnant (Trinity Village), Helen Smith is at Frye Hospital and will be returning Trinity Ridge.

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, Ashlee Bumgardner, Danelle Bumgardner, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Marilyn Childers, Alan Fulbright, family of James McDaniel, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, and Scott Speagle. Prayers for world peace and for our church, the United States of America, and especially the families of those who have given their lives in the service of our country and those who continue to protect our freedoms and for all members of our Armed Forces.

HAPPY SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY TO:

Larry Jarrett	9-1	Ted Whisnant	9-4	Brenda Jarrett	9-4
Mike Pisko	9-4	Gene Crouse	9-4	Jeff Scronce	9-12
Debi Pisko	9-13	Chris Jarrett	9-22	David Wilfong	9-24

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK:

Today: Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

9:30am – Special Bible study by Pastor Doug in the picnic shelter.

10:30am - Worship Celebration

Monday: Labor Day - Office Closed

Wednesday: 6:30pm - Evening Vespers Service

Saturday: 9:00am - Grace Prayer Breakfast at Four Peas in a Pod - Conover

UPCOMING DATES:

+ *Sun., Sept. 13: Grandparents Sunday, 10:30am – Gift/Prayers/Blessing for Grandparents Jarrett Family Reunion - Fellowship Hall - 1:00pm*

+ *Wed., Sept. 16: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*

+ *Sun, Sept 20: Homecoming Worship Service followed by Covered Dish Luncheon in Shelter*

+ *Sat., Oct. 3: Blessing of the Animals Service at Grace Outdoor Shelter 5:00pm*

+ *Sun., Oct. 4: Food for the Poor Sunday 10:30am; Catawba Co. Walk for Hunger 3:00pm*

- +Wed., Oct. 21: *Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
- + Sun, Oct. 25: *Reformation Sunday Service at 10:30am*
- + Sat., Oct. 31: *Grace Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat 5pm:7pm*

GIVING AND ATTENDANCE FOR LAST SUNDAY

	Offering		Attendance	
Date	Total Receipts	General Fund	Worship	Sunday School
8/30/2026	\$1,590	\$1,590	44	21

KNOW YOUR CHURCH SURVEY

As a part of discovering God's vision for His Church here at Grace, you are invited to participate in a "Know Your Church" survey that will help us to see our areas of strength and also our growing edges. Please click the link below, answer questions to the best of your ability, and then submit. Your responses will be tabulated with everyone else who responds. Up to 60 people can respond to the survey. If you want to do the survey but do not have a computer, smart phone, or internet, please see Pastor Doug or Todd and we can get you set up on one of the computers here at the church.

Know Your Church Survey Link <https://churchhealthreport.com/survey/?s=YQ3U7AB>

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

The deadline for submitting your pictures is Sunday, September 13th. Please email to us a digital photo of your choosing of you and your family members who worship at Grace. It does not have to be a formal portrait but should clearly show everyone's faces. If you do not have one we can help you take one. If you would like someone to take a picture for you please see Todd Childers immediately after worship.

CATAWBA COUNTY HUNGER WALK

Ashure Ministry, Hickory Soup Kitchen, and The Corner Table are proud to come together to host the 2026 Catawba County Hunger Walk! All walkers who register and raise a minimum of \$25 before August 30th will receive a walk t-shirt. David and Belinda Wilfong are our church team captains. If you choose to register online, please visit cchungerwalk.com and register under our team name which is ***Grace Lutheran NALC Newton***. The password is ***hungerwalk2026\$\$*** and is required for online registration. The forms required are also included in this newsletter.

Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace
Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard
Lector – Stormy Shull Youth Leader – Stormy Shull
Altar Preparation – Cindy Bivens
Communion Assistants – Cindy Bivens & Tina Hefner
Ushers – Jeff Scronce & David Wilfong
Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Jeff Scronce

DEVOTION - ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

This letter to Philemon was written during one of Paul's many imprisonments. It's the shortest letter he ever wrote, but don't let its size trick you. This is actually one of the most explosive things Paul ever composed. From what we can gather, Philemon was a wealthy Roman citizen from Colossae. He likely met Paul during his mission in Ephesus ([Acts 19](#)), where he became a follower of Jesus. When Paul's coworker Epaphras started a Jesus community in Colossae, Philemon became a leader of a church based in his home.

Philemon, like other household patriarchs in the Roman world, enslaved people, one of whom was named Onesimus. At some point, these two had a serious conflict. Onesimus wronged Philemon in some way, perhaps by theft or cheating. Whatever exactly happened, it was made worse when Onesimus ran away (Phm. vv. 18-19). Eventually, Onesimus visited Paul in prison, likely to appeal for help, and there he became a follower of Jesus and a beloved assistant to Paul. Paul finds himself in a difficult and very delicate situation as he writes this letter. He wants Philemon to not simply forgive Onesimus but also receive and embrace him as a brother in the Messiah. In other words, Paul is asking Philemon to release Onesimus from enslavement and treat him like an equal within their Jesus community.

Philemon 1-7: A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Paul opens the letter with a prayer (Phm. vv. 1-7), thanking God for the love and faithfulness Philemon has shown toward Jesus and his people. Paul starts to pave the way for his request with this dense line: "I pray that the partnership that springs from your faith may effectively lead you to recognize all the good things at work in us, leading us into the Messiah" (Phm. 6). The key word here is "partnership," or in Greek, *koinonia*. It means "sharing, mutual participation." It's when two or more people receive something together and share in it, becoming partners. Paul says that faithfulness to Jesus means recognizing that all of his followers are equal partners who share in the gift of God's love and grace.

For Paul, this experience of *koinonia* among Jesus' followers isn't just an idea; it's something you do in your relationships.

Philemon 8-20: A Request for Forgiveness and Restoration

Paul then gives his request to Philemon (Phm. vv. 8-20), finally bringing up Onesimus, who has become Paul's "child" in prison (Phm. 10). Paul has led Onesimus to dedicate his life and allegiance to Jesus, so both Paul and Onesimus are now family members in Jesus. Onesimus has been serving Paul faithfully in prison. And though Paul wants to keep him around, he knows that this unresolved conflict with Philemon has to be reconciled, especially since they are both followers of Jesus. Paul asks that Philemon receive Onesimus back "no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave, as a beloved brother ... in the Lord" (Phm. 16). This is a tall order. Under Roman law, Philemon had every legal right to have Onesimus punished or put in prison. Paul is not only asking him to forgive Onesimus but to welcome him back into Colossae as a social equal and as a family member.

This is way beyond kindness—it's unheard of! Freeing an enslaved person and treating them like family would mean upsetting the status quo of Roman social order. Why should Philemon do such a thing? At this point, Paul pulls a brilliant move, recalling the key word *koinonia* from his opening prayer. He says that if you are truly a "partner" with me, then "welcome Onesimus as if he were me. And if he's wronged you or owes you anything, charge it to me ... I will repay it" (Phm. vv. 17-19).

Within this request, we can see the heart of Paul's Gospel message being acted out. For Paul, the Gospel is about reconciliation. As he told the Corinthians, "In the Messiah, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's sins against them" ([2 Cor. 5:19](#)). In this situation, Paul is playing out the role of Jesus. He will absorb the consequences of Onesimus' wrongdoing and pay the cost himself, all so that he can be reconciled to Philemon. Paul's message was about more than a legal transaction—it's all about *koinonia*. Onesimus, Philemon, and Paul are all equal partners before God, and they all share the same need for forgiveness. The ground is level before the cross. Philemon and Onesimus can no longer relate merely as "master" and "slave" because they are now family members, brothers in the Messiah, as Paul tells Philemon, along with the entire church of Colossae. "In God's new family, people are not Greek or Jewish, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigners or uncivilized, slave or free. But the Messiah is all, and is in all people" ([Col. 3:11](#))