

Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost



September 20, 2026 10:30 AM

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



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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 spirit and 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

*** AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM**

P: Dear friends, as we gather to celebrate God's blessings and faithfulness on this 229th anniversary of Grace, we give thanks for the covenant God has made with us in Holy Baptism. As we come before God to make public affirmation of baptism into Christ, we rededicate ourselves to this covenant of grace.

Let us pray. Merciful God, we thank you for this family of believers, whom you have made your own by water and the Word in baptism. You have called them to yourself, enlightened them with the gifts of your Spirit, and nourished them in the community of faith. Uphold your servants in the gifts and promises of baptism, and unite the hearts of all whom you have brought to new birth. We ask this in the name of Christ. **C: Amen.**

*** PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church.

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

Response: I renounce them.

Do you renounce the powers of this world that rebel against God?

Response: I renounce them.

Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?

Response: I renounce them.

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.

You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

Baptized People of God: I do, and I ask God to help and guide me!

People of God, do you promise to support and pray for one another in your life in Christ?

We do, and we ask God to help and guide us.

Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth, cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life. Stir up in your people the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. **Amen.**

* **GATHERING HYMN**

“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

LBW 320

* **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: Heavenly Father, we come before You today with hearts overflowing with gratitude. Thank You for the gift of this day, for the blessing of gathering together as one family in Christ, and for the privilege of celebrating this special homecoming and 229 years of Your faithfulness. You have been our refuge through every season, our guide through every challenge, and our joy in every victory. As we look back with thanksgiving, we also look forward with hope. Pour out Your Spirit afresh upon us. Renew our passion for Your Word, deepen our love for one another, and strengthen our commitment to serve our community. May Grace Church continue to be a beacon of light, a place of healing, and a home for all who seek You; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Exodus 19: 1-11

On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. ² They journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. ³ Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the Israelites: ⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶ but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.” ⁷ So Moses went, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ The people all answered as one, “Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do.” Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord. ⁹ Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after.” When Moses had told the words of the people to the Lord, ¹⁰ the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹ and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

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

PSALM 18: 1-6, 16

¹I love you, O Lord, my strength.

²The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom

I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

⁴The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me;

⁵the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.

⁶In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help.

From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

¹⁶He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters.

SECOND READING: Romans 12: 1-13

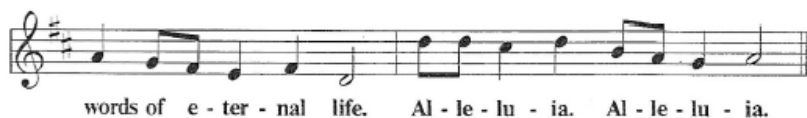
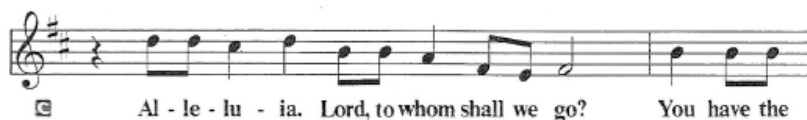
I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. ²Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what 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 encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. ⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

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 14: 22-36**

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

²² Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. ²³ After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone. ²⁴ Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land, for a strong wind had risen, and they were fighting heavy waves. ²⁵ About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear, they cried out, "It's a ghost!" ²⁷ But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" ²⁸ Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." ²⁹ "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted. ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" ³² When they climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³ Then the disciples worshiped him. "You really are the Son of God!" they exclaimed. ³⁴ After they had crossed the lake, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ When the people recognized Jesus, the news of his arrival spread quickly throughout the whole area, and soon people were bringing all their sick to be healed. ³⁶ They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.

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

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON



"Don't be afraid! Take Courage! I am Here: Celebrating God's Faithful Love in Ages Past and the Glorious Hope We Have in Christ for Years to Come!"

"If you want to walk on water, You've got to get out of the boat"
- John Ortberg

Pastor Doug

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

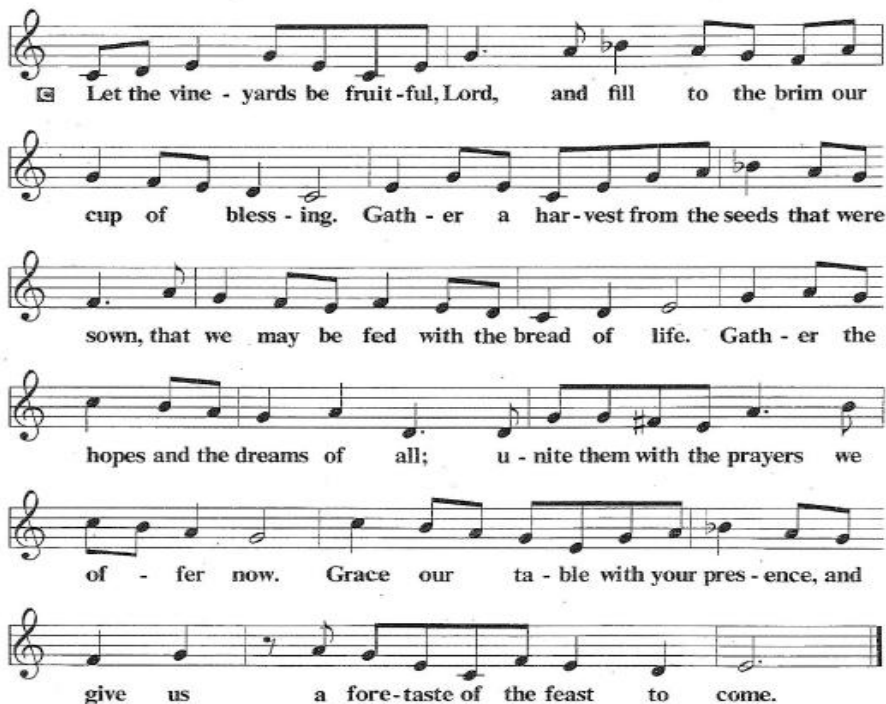
P: The peace of Christ be with you always. C: **And also with you.**

Worshipers 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 Let the Vineyards**



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our
cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were
sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the
hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we
of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence, and
give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

*** OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Gracious God, we thank You for the journey that has brought us together for another Homecoming celebration. As we offer these gifts, we give not only what we have, but also our lives, in gratitude for Your faithfulness and for the love that unites us. Use these offerings to build up Your work in this place and in the wider world for the sake of our

Lord who offered Himself for us, which we now prepare our hearts to celebrate and receive in this meal of grace; we ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. **C: Amen**

***DIALOGUE AND PREFACE**

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 melody is simple and hymn-like. 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 first staff ends with a double bar line. The second staff ends with a double bar line. The third staff ends with a double bar line. The fourth staff ends with a double bar line.

*** COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Lord Jesus, as we gather in this homecoming, we remember Your death and resurrection, and we give thanks that You have made us one in Your Body and Blood. May this sacrament be a sign of our unity, a time of renewal, and a foretaste of the coming kingdom. We receive You in love, in hope, and in faith, and we commit ourselves to live in the world as Your faithful people; in the name of Jesus 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. Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

“My Hope is Built on Nothing Less”

LBW 293

***DISMISSAL**

P: Celebrating an amazing history of God's love and faithfulness, let us boldly step out in faith in our Lord Jesus, keeping our focus on Him, as we joyfully move forward to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. **C: Thanks be to God!**

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Eloise Eckard, and in loving memory of Everett and Faye Eckard, and in honor of Donna Eckard on her birthday.



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, Jack Wilfong, 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, Travis 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.

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost

9:30am – Sunday School

10:30am - Worship Celebration

After Worship: Homecoming Celebration Meal in Fellowship Hall / Picnic Shelter

Monday: 6:00pm - Leadership Ministry Board

Wednesday: 6:30pm – Evening Vespers Service

HAPPY SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY TO:

Larry Jarrett 9-1
Mike Pisko 9-4
Debi Pisko 9-13
David Wilfong 9-24

Ted Whisnant 9-4
Gene Crouse 9-4
Kathy Leatherman 9-15

Brenda Jarrett 9-4
Jeff Scronce 9-12
Chris Jarrett 9-22

UPCOMING EVENTS

+ *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

Date	Offering		Attendance	
	Total Receipts	General Fund	Worship	Sunday School
9/13/2026	\$1,785	\$1,650	37	10

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>

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! David and Belinda Wilfong are our church team captains. Any remaining donations should be turned in to David or Belinda by Sunday, September 27. David and Belinda will pick up our T-shirts that week and any final donations collected will be turned into Ashure at that time.

CHECK IT OUT! New Titles in the Library!

- The Baxter Family Series by Karen Kingsbury
 1. Fame
 2. First Born
 3. Found
 4. Family
- Then Sings My Soul by Robert J. Morgan - 150 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories

GRACE HOSTS BLUEGRASS BAND



Grace will be hosting "The Four Walls Bluegrass Gospel Band" on Sunday, Oct 11 at 5pm. If weather permitting, the concert will be in the outdoor shelter. We will have a BBQ Dinner afterwards. Please bring a side dish to share or a dessert. BBQ, Buns, Sauce, Slaw, Cups, Plates, Drinks and Ice will be provided. Please invite your friends and family!

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



1797 – Grace Lutheran and Grace Union Church organized, united congregation of Lutheran and Dutch Presbyterians (Reformed), met for worship in local barns and homes.

1807 – First Union Church (2 story log building). Land bought from Samuel Jarrett (3 acres)

1858 – Brick Union Church was built.

April 5, 1942 – First Service in the new Grace Church

building on Easter Sunday.

March 7, 1948 – Church building burned down, front doors survived.

July 17, 1949 – First service held in basement chapel.

March 26, 1950 – First service held upstairs in rebuilt church.

1952 – Parsonage built. **1964** – Fellowship Hall built. **1997** – Picnic Shelter built.

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

“The Blessing of Coming Home”

“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” – Psalm 122:1 (KJV)

Homecoming is more than a date on the church calendar—it’s a reminder of God’s faithfulness through the years (229 years to be exact). It’s a time when memories meet new beginnings, when we see familiar faces and remember that the family of God is not bound by time or distance.

Think for a moment about the word home. Home is where you are known, where you are loved, and where you belong. For many of us, this church has been that place—a spiritual home where we first learned to pray, where we sang our first hymns, where we felt the warmth of God’s presence, love, and grace. In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of the prodigal son. After wandering far from home, the son returns to find his father running to meet him, arms open wide. That’s the heart of God toward His people. Whether we’ve been here every Sunday or have been away for years, God’s welcome never changes. His arms are always open, His table always set, His love always ready to embrace us. Homecoming is not just about looking back—it’s about looking forward. The same God who carried this Grace through the past will guide us into God’s glorious future. The same Spirit who stirred revival in years gone by can stir it again today. And the same Savior who saved us then is still saving, still healing, still calling people home, and still sending us out to proclaim the Gospel in loving word and deed.

What is one way God has shown His faithfulness to you through this church?

Who might God be calling you to “welcome home” in the days ahead?

Lord, thank You for the gift of this Grace Church family and for your 229 years of faithfulness and steadfast love. Thank You for the memories, the milestones, and the ministry that have shaped our lives. As we celebrate Homecoming and our 229th anniversary, help us to remember that our true home is in You. Keep our hearts open to welcome and serve others as we share the love of Jesus. Keep our eyes fixed on You Jesus and the day when we will gather in our eternal home with You forever.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.