

MARK TIMES

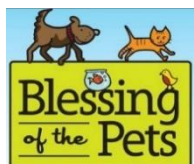
NEWS and NOTES for September 28, 2025

Wednesday, Oct. 1: 10:30AM Joint Use Task Force – conference room
Thursday, Oct. 2: 4:00PM Chancel choir
5:30PM Men's Chorus
6:00PM Bell Choir
6:00PM Yoga – Parish Hall
Sunday, Oct. 5: 4:00PM SHINE worship with Blessing of the Animals - courtyard

Adult Forum: *The Parables of Luke 16, Part 2*

Dovetailing with our Gospel readings for today and next Sunday, Pastor Brian will offer bible classes on the parables found in each. We conclude today with the parable of the "Rich Man and Lazarus." Grab your coffee and snacks and meet us on the far end of the Parish Hall after worship.

Blessing of the Animals Next Sunday!



We join our partners from St. George's and our animal friends to celebrate the feast of St. Francis with a special SHINE service and a **Blessing of the Animals!**

Our service will be at **4:00PM NEXT Sunday, October 5*** in the **church courtyard****. Please **bring your own chair** if possible.

Part of our service is dedicated to **remembering our beloved pets who have died**. You are invited to **bring a photo of your departed pet** (framed, if possible) to place on a remembrance table.

*There is no SHINE service on Saturday this month. **If the courtyard is obstructed by construction materials, the event may be held on the big parking lot.

Meals on Wheels Needs Help!

The Meals-On-Wheels services provided out of our Parish Hall need more volunteers, particularly on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Please see Frank Dressel or David Buckley for more details about serving those for whom these meals may be the only substantial meal of the day.



SHARE THE WARMTH October 5 thru 26, 2025: Inspired by Phillip's Wish in the movie **5000 Blankets** and the needs of our food pantry clients, we are collecting gently worn **coats, thermal underwear, sweatshirts, t-shirts, undershirts, socks, hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves** for the homeless in our area. **Warming blankets, handwarmers and new underwear for men and women** are also appreciated! Donations will be distributed to various organizations throughout the project period with donation numbers provided periodically. A collection container is in the Narthex!

Ladies Lunch Bunch will meet at Papa Vito's in downtown Belleville on **Wednesday, October 8 at 12 noon**. Please RSVP to June at 618 977 4389 or Jandcbenedick@gmail.com.

Offerings (9/21): General Fund: \$4,447.27; Food Pantry/Woodrome Memorials: \$5/\$194.92

Join the Choir!

The chancel choir welcomes Cheri and Curtis as new members. We are delighted to have them and would love to have you join too! Check out our new Thursday rehearsal times: Voice choir meets at 4:00PM; Men's Choir meets at 5:30PM; and Bell Choir meets at 6:00PM. If you can carry a tune at all (you don't need to sing solo or even read music), the chancel choir would love to welcome you!

From the Bishop: A Word to Fall

"Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

Jesus knows his "why." Throughout the gospels, and especially in Luke's telling, Jesus is never unclear about his purpose, his mission, his very reason for being. From the very beginning, his role is proclaimed: "Do not be afraid," the angel tells the shepherds, "for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11). Jesus is sent into the world to save.

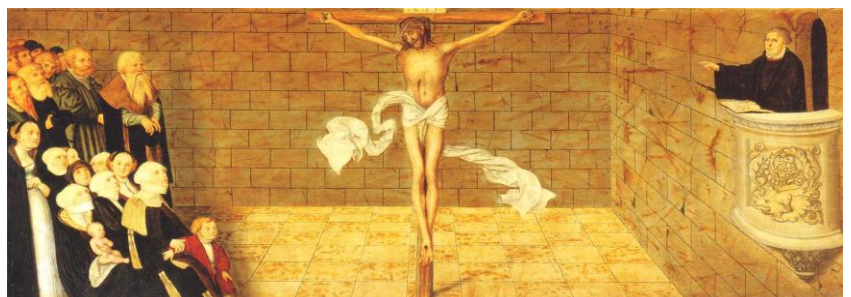
This "why" comes into sharp focus in Luke 15. In response to the complaints of religious leaders, Jesus tells three parables. In the first, his "why" looks like a shepherd who leaves behind ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that is lost. In the second, it looks like a woman who sweeps her entire house to find a single lost coin. In the third, it takes the form of a father who runs to embrace his wayward son. Together, these stories paint a picture of Jesus' mission: to seek and to save the lost. And he never abandons that mission—not even at the cross.

For us, however, it is far too easy to forget our "why." Through baptism, we are called to share in Christ's mission, yet we often become more concerned with protecting what we already have. We focus on keeping the ninety-nine sheep safe, on preserving the nine coins still in hand, or on placating the elder brother—while overlooking those who are wandering, waiting, and longing to be welcomed home.

If our "why" is not Jesus, we risk losing the heart of what it means to be the church. If the purpose behind our sermons, worship services, choirs, youth gatherings, potlucks, offerings, quilts, food drives, social statements, advocacy, and acts of hospitality is not to lead the lost to Jesus, then we are missing the point. Our work may be busy and well-intentioned, but without Christ at the center, we fail in our calling. The question for us is clear: if Jesus is not our "why," then church, what are we doing?

Several years ago, I visited the St. Marien Church in Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther regularly preached. The altar painting inside St. Marien bears powerful witness to the essential "why" of our existence as Christ's church. Created by Lucas Cranach the Elder and completed by his son, Lucas Cranach the Younger, around 1547, the bottom panel of the painting depicts Martin Luther in a pulpit on the right. On the left is gathered Luther's congregation in Wittenberg. Directly in the center of the painting, between Luther on the right and the congregation on the left, stands the image of the crucified Christ. From the pulpit, Luther's arm is outstretched, intentionally pointing his hearers toward the crucified Christ.

In the image of the crucified Christ to which Luther points, we see the fullness of Jesus' "why." Jesus comes to save the lost, including us — all of us. We are the lost ones who Jesus saves. As those who have been saved, we are now the ones who Jesus calls and sends, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to lead other lost ones to him. Who are the lost ones today in your congregation, in your community, in the world around you? How are you pointing them to Jesus? And if you are not, what's your why?



Centered in Christ +
Bishop Greg