

Reconciling in Christ Sunday 2026

Celebrating Diversity as God's Children



Introduction

Every year the ELCA celebrates the diversity of God's children through the Reconciling in Christ worship. A variety of biblical interpretations help express God's word from multiple cultures such as the First Nations Bible, prayers written from voices from the queer, black and latin communities as well as voices from the Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship (ELW). The gospels lead us into the justice Jesus spoke into the world and invites us into inclusion of all God's people. Let us celebrate through word, music and prayer as we accompany each other in our faith journey as a church community.

ST. PETER'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
121 N. SPRING STREET, MIDDLETOWN, PA 17057
Sunday Worship 10:00am and Wednesday 10:00am

THIS IS CHRIST'S CHURCH THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU HERE

St. Peter's is a community of faith committed to loving God and our neighbors. As a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and a Reconciling in Christ congregation joining with Reconciling Works, we gather for worship, study and service. As a Reconciling in Christ congregation, we welcome and invite all of God's people regardless of age, race, ethnicity, physical or mental abilities, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or economic status. Come join us and experience the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

SERVING OUR CHURCH

January 25, 2026

Preaching & Presiding:

Pr. Molly Haggerty

Musicians:

Spirit & Truth

Reader:

Don Hossler

PRELUDE: I Choose Love *by Mark Miller*

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

MUSIC MEDITATION: At This Table *by Selah*

GATHER

Gathering/Land Acknowledgement

L: Created out of nothing,

A: We come here to be reminded of who we are.

L: Created for goodness,

A: We come with open hearts to be filled with everlasting love.

L: Created as a beloved child of God,

A: We come in celebration of the diversity of the body of Christ.

L: Created with a heart for celebrating the rich diversity of creation, we come trusting in the one who creates, redeems, and sustains us as we acknowledge and honor the **Susquehannock and** Lenape peoples upon whose ancestral homelands we gather, as well as all our Indigenous siblings who continue to care for this place –this land - and call it their home.

A: As we live into the diversity that God has created, may we be bold to tell the whole story, for in knowing the truth of who we have been, we come to know more fully who we are called to be. Amen.

HYMN: All Are Welcome: ELW 641 v 1-3

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

L: Water is life. Our bodies need water. This community needs water to be resilient and flourish. Plants and animals need water. Water is essential for all of life on this planet to thrive and flourish.

L: We need water for drinking, for washing, for cooking, for cleaning, for refreshing. Water sustains our lives, and water enhances our lives. Every day of our lives includes multiple uses of water.

L: Let us give thanks for the gift of water and for baptism.

A: We give you thanks, O God, for this water that comes to us as a gift from our Creator, the source of all that is good and life-giving. You are a generous and loving God who blesses us through water and who claims all people in the fullness of sexual or romantic orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, gender expression, immigration status, beliefs, and abilities.

L: Let us fill this font with water – water from our homes, water from nearby lakes and rivers, creeks and streams – water upon which all living creatures depend and that nourishes all of life on this planet. As we sing, you are invited to bring forward your water to pour into this font. We, though many, are one in the unity of God's love for us and for all the world. Water is life.

SONG: Living Water *by Anne Wilson*

VERSE 1:

This goes out to every outcast To the "just don't quite fit in"
Every wrong way, runaway rebel So ashamed of where you've been
This goes out to every searcher Trying to fill that empty space
Well, your searching days are over now Everything's about to change

CHORUS:

Come on down to the living water Waves of mercy washing over you
No more strangers, only sons and daughters
Come down to the living water.
And rise up new

VERSE 2:

Have you heard about a man named Jesus?
He's the way, the truth, the life
Stretched out His arms on a rugged cross
And paid every sinner's price
So when you're tired of all your running
You don't have to run no more
You can leave it all behind you
Just believe and be reborn

CHORUS

BRIDGE:

Oh, this is your invitation
Oh, no more lost and alone

Oh, this is your invitation
Hear your Father saying
"Welcome home"

VERSE 3:

See that cross up on the steeple?
Hear that sweet forgiveness song?
Come and join the Jesus people
This is where your heart belongs

L: O God, may we live as careful stewards, guardians of this precious gift, protectors of the health of this planet, builders of resilient communities, and cultivators of life-giving relationships that promote peace and unity.

A: Thanks be to God! Amen!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: God of Beauty, you gather your beloved children into your care, each one a unique image of you. You claim us as your own and call us to follow in the ways of mercy, justice, and joy. Strengthen our changing hearts and minds to continue the work of your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

A: Amen.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:1-4

Nonetheless, those who were in distress won't be exhausted. At an earlier time, God cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but later God glorified the way of the sea, the far side of the Jordan, and the Galilee of the nations. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned. You have made the nation great; you have increased its joy. They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest, as those who divide plunder rejoice. As on the day of Midian, you've shattered the yoke that burdened them, the staff on their shoulders, and the rod of their oppressor.

L: Word of God, word of freedom.

A: Praise be to God

PSALM 27:1, 4-9

The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Should I fear anyone?

The Lord is a fortress protecting my life.

Should I be frightened of anything?

I have asked one thing from the Lord—

it's all I seek:

to live in the Lord's house all the days of my life,
seeing your beauty

and constantly adoring your temple.

Because you will shelter me in your own dwelling
during troubling times;

you will hide me in a secret place in your own tent;

you will set me up high, safe on a rock.

Now my head is higher than the enemies surrounding me,
and I will offer sacrifices in God's tent—

sacrifices with shouts of joy!

I will sing and praise the Lord.

Lord, listen to my voice when I cry out—

have mercy on me and answer me!

Come, my heart says, seek God's face.

Lord, I do seek your face!

Please don't hide it from me!

Don't push your servant aside angrily—

you have been my help!

God who saves me,

don't neglect me!

Don't leave me all alone!

SECOND READING: 1 John 3:1-2

See what kind of love the Creator has given to us in that we should be called God's children, and that is what we are! Because the world did not recognize God, it does not recognize us. Dear friends, now we are God's children, and it hasn't yet appeared what we will be. We know that when God appears we will be like God because we'll see God as God is.

L: Word of God, word of freedom.

A: Praise be to God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:12-23

L: The Word made flesh dwells among us.

A: Full of grace and truth.

Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light, and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in the shadow of death. From that time Jesus began to announce, “Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!”

As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” Right away, they left their nets and followed him. Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John.

They were in a boat with Zebedee, their father, repairing their nets. Jesus called them and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.

L: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ

A: Praise to you, Word of life!

YOUTH TALK

SERMON

HYMN: Will You Come and Follow Me ELW 798 v 1-3

CREED/STATEMENT OF FAITH

L: Let us join together in proclaiming our faith:

A: We believe in you, O God, who spoke all life into being, author of heaven and earth, architect of time, quilter of the cosmos. You shape our bodies from the dust of the ground, and by your breath we are given life.

We believe in you, O God, who became incarnate in Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh, truly divine and truly human. You

lived among us to reveal your justice, died among us to break the bonds of sin and death, and were raised among us to bring abundant life.

We believe in you, O God, who transforms us by the Holy Spirit, draws us into community, moves us to action, and inspires us to hope against hope. You breathe new life into a fallen world and equip us to proclaim the good news of resurrecting love. All thanks and praise to you, O God, our beginning and our end. Amen.

+PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The prayers have been composed especially for this service, using the pattern in Evangelical Lutheran Worship (page 105), reflecting the theme of celebrating diversity. Worship planners and leaders are encouraged to make these prayers their own, adapting the suggested petitions to reflect the language and concerns of the local community.

L: Trusting in God's extraordinary love, let us come near to the Creator in prayer.

A brief silence.

L: We pray for our pastors, deacons, bishops, and church leaders, that they may guide us well as we become a loving, welcoming, and resilient community in Jesus Christ. We give thanks for ReconcilingWorks and all of our Reconciling in Christ ministry partners. We pray that the whole church may someday become a blessed community where all our LGBTQIA+ [or Queer] siblings are celebrated. Spirit, intercede for us,

A: Send wholeness to our church.

L: We pray for the sustainability of our planet. Guide us to care for creation, be mindful of how much we throw away, reduce how much carbon dioxide our lifestyles add to the air we breathe, and remember how much our choices impact the lives of people in poor and marginalized communities. Spirit, intercede for us,

A: Send wholeness to our Earth.

L: We pray for our siblings all around the world. We pray that leaders everywhere recognize and respond to the suffering of the poor, marginalized, and persecuted. We pray that governments enact laws that protect and defend the poor, marginalized, and persecuted. We pray that your hand of justice intercede for us. Spirit, intercede for us,

A: Send wholeness to the nations.

L: We pray for people who have chaos swirling around and within them. We pray for those that have been told they are less than, wrong, or an outcast for who they are. We pray that all of us find true peace, joy, and wholeness in you. We pray for people who are victims of violence because of queerphobia [or homophobia, transphobia, biphobia], racism, sexism, and ableism. We pray for your mercy, love, and healing to care for them. Spirit, intercede for us,

A: Send wholeness to your children.

L: We pray that our congregation and its ministries uplift and care for all living things in our world. We pray that we work towards justice and peace in our own family and community. Spirit, intercede for us,

A: Send wholeness to us.

L: We pray for LGBTQIA+ saints, all our siblings who have gone before us in the fight for justice, freedom, and peace, even when church and society ignored them and many of your LGBTQIA+ [or Queer] children forgot them. Help us remember and honor the memory of the people who have boldly stood as themselves, showing the substance you created even when the world told them to hide. Spirit, intercede for us,

A: Send wholeness to this community of Queer [or LGBTQIA+] people and allies.

L: Receive the prayers of your children, merciful God, and hold us forever in your steadfast love; through Jesus Christ, our holy wisdom.

A: Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE

L: The spirit-filled peace of Christ be with you always!

A: And also with you!

L: Let us greet one another with a sign of this spirit-filled peace, respecting boundaries and honoring the consent of our neighbors.

OFFERING AND OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray. O God, from nothing you created not only us as your beloved children but everything we would need to have an abundant life. As we bring our varied gifts to you, strengthen us as we celebrate the diversity you have blessed us with. Fill us with what we need and

help us to recognize that there is more than enough for all as we work to bring your love to the ends of the earth.

A: Amen.

L: Your Word of welcome came among us in Jesus, who invited all to the table of blessing, healed the sick, revived the brokenhearted, and challenged those in power to welcome all and love all for who they are, containing a multitude of identities, simultaneously flawed and beautiful, saints and sinners.

LITURGY FOR THE TABLE

DIALOGUE:

L: The Lord be with you.

A: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

A: We lift them to the Lord.

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

A: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

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.

Birthing into your beautiful creation, he taught us to live in harmony and wholeness. By the work of your son, you call us to pursue justice and abundant life for all people.

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:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Holy ELW 762

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Blessed are you, O God, Creator of this wild and wonderful world.

In the beginning, you called forth light from the shadows;

You filled land and sea with life;

You filled us with your own Spirit.

You so loved your own creation that you set your bow in the sky;

You promised life in a world that brings death;

You sent Jesus, your Son to gather us close to you.
Who, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks,
broke it
and said: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this, and
remember me.

Again, after supper, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to
those gathered at the table, saying: This cup is the new promise in my
blood, shed for you and for all for the forgiveness of sin. Do this,
and remember me.

L: As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the
mystery of faith:

A: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

L: O God of many names, pour out your Spirit upon us and on these
gifts of bread and wine. Bless this meal of shared life for the sake of
the world, and fill us with your own thirst for beauty and hunger for
justice, that we might continue in the ways of your Son, Jesus Christ.
All things bright and beautiful are entrusted to us by you,
And with all creation we praise you, O God, Blessed and holy Trinity,
Now and always. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

L: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us
using the words of our common prayer:

**A: Heavenly God, giver of life, holy is your name, your blessed
community come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive
those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and
deliver us from evil. For you reign in power and glory now and
forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

L: This table belongs to Jesus and the meal is offered by Jesus, and so
all of God's children are welcome to celebrate.

Jesus is made known to us in the breaking of the bread and the
pouring of the wine. Come and eat.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

HYMNS: All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly ELW 461
Here Is Bread ELW 483

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Assisting Minister

L: Let us pray: Jesus our friend and savior, your life, death, and resurrection changed our world. May this meal of bread and wine bless us and sustain us in the building of a blessed community which welcomes all people, that sees all people, and that works for justice for all people. **Amen.**

BLESSING:

L: As we leave this space may God's face shine upon us, God's love sustain us, and God's peace inspire us and grant us peace. May God – Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer - fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may live in hope of a blessed community where humanity's diversity is celebrated. **Amen.**

HYMN: The Lord Now Sends Us Forth (*sing twice*) ELW 538

SENDING:

L: Go in peace to seek justice for all people.

A: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE: You Are Holy ELW 525

ReconcilingWorks RIC Sunday 2026

The Altar flowers are dedicated to Clifford Cramer by Ida & family and in memory of our parents by Allen & Barb Jacobs.

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Middletown is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Susquehannock peoples and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this place their home.

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St. Peter's News

Our prayers and the comfort of our Christian faith are extended to the family of Richard Brandt. Richard passed away January 13. His service of Christian burial will be held here, at St. Peter's, on February 14. Visitation will begin at 10am, service at 11am with luncheon to follow.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: New to our prayer list this month: Gerald Staub, Lynette Grim, Paula, Michele, Amelia, Nolan Smith, Gary Fichthorn, James Spedden, Jaiden Mullins, Jimmy & Cece Abromitis, Lynda Fitzpatrick. **Those friends and members in need of continued prayers:** John Ziats, Josie Brewster, Michelle, Milton, Bruce, Jim White, Tina Polito, Patty & John Stewart, Karen Eckles, Barbara Henry, Emily Booth, Lucinda Sheaffer.

****SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES****

Justin Polito, Corbin Stetler, Gabriel Goldsborough, Jordane Mondeaux, Anthony Mondeaux, Edgar Lopez, John Pappas, Colton Stone, Aaron Williams.

Holy Huddle- January 25, 2026 in Luther Hall

Pr. Molly will be making chili and cornbread. Bennett will be leading the discussion.

Join us for a coffee hour after service on February 1 to say goodbye to Kate (Molly's mom) before she moves to Wisconsin.

Youth group bowling fun on Sunday February 1, 2026 at 12pm

Invite friends and join us at ABC East Lanes- 1001 Eisenhower Blvd. RSVP to Pastor Molly or Sam Starlipper.

Ash Wednesday services are on Wednesday February 18, 2026.

Join us for the 10am service in the chapel and 7pm service in the sanctuary.

SOUP-er Bowl Sunday food drive- February 8, 2026. Please bring in canned soup for our food ministries. You can put your donated cans on the table for the team you are rooting for.