## *Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

September 27, 2026

Gathering
Welcome
Announcements and Prayer

Prelude — Laurie Knapp

*(Prayerfully prepare your hearts and minds for worship.)*

*Call to Worship
Words from the heart
**Whispers from the soul**
A song sung high
**A psalm chanted low**
May all the words of our mouths
**and all the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight,**
**O God, our Rock and our Redeemer.**

*Opening Hymn — *"We, Thy People, Praise Thee"* — 67

*Opening Prayer
**We your humble children invoke your blessing on us. We adore you, whose name is love, whose nature is compassion, whose presence is joy, whose Word is truth, whose Spirit is goodness, whose holiness is beauty, whose will is peace, whose service is perfect freedom, and in knowledge of whom stands our eternal life. Unto you be all honor and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Canticle of Christ's Obedience *Response 2* — 167

*Psalter — Psalm 78:1-4, 9-20, 32b-38a — 799-800

*Gloria Patri — 70
**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

Passing of the Peace: *Let us greet one another with love and peace.*

Anthem — *"My Lord, What a Morning"* — Choir

"Let the Children Come!" — Tonya Spires

*(Those 3 years of age through 8 years of age may go to Children's Church.)*

Scripture Lessons — Exodus 17:1-7 — Page 63 (O.T.)
Philippians 2:1-13 — Pages 187-188 (N.T.)

*Gospel Lesson — Matthew 21:23-32 — Page 27 (N.T.)

Sermon — God's Will — Rev. Darlene L. Kelley

*Hymn of Invitation — *"Change My Heart, O God"* — TFWS 2152

Pastoral Prayer
The Lord's Prayer
**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. Amen.**

Presentation of Tithes & Offerings
Offertory — Laurie Knapp
*Doxology — 95
**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**

*Closing Hymn — *"Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me"* (vs. 1-3) — 361

*Benediction
*Benediction Response — *"May the Lord, Mighty God, Bless and Keep You"* — Choir & Congregation

*Please Stand As You Are Able

***Leading in Worship Today***

Pastor: *Rev. Darlene L. Kelley*
Pianist: *Laurie Knapp*
Liturgist: *Raleigh Carter*
AV Director: *Marie Stiles*
AV Assistant: *Chris Derrick; Erin Derrick*

***VISITORS ARE WELCOME*** in the service of worship! Please make use of the visitor's tags (located in the pew backs) to help us better welcome you as a visitor to Trinity this morning.

***Today's Lovely Flowers*** *are given to the* ***Glory of God.***

**"AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS ...**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hilda Edwards | Marilyn Lloyd | Ruth Frady | Rhett Hook | Mary Sue Lewis | Christopher McCroskey |
| John Ballentine | Jeff Portwood | Ray Frady | Latson Lewis | English Pearcy | Jeanette Hornsby |
| Hannah Glanz | Arvan Derrick | Fran Laska | Kaye Floyd | Libby Strickland | Raleigh Carter |
| Jack Stevens | Donna Easterling Becude | | | | |

**Shut-Ins:** Nell Cooke; Gillett Hipp; Linda Maloch

**Family and Friends: Joanne Carter** *(mother of Raleigh Carter);* **Landon Luesing** *(friend of Jo Ann Heiting);* **Lynda Areheart** *(friend of Jo Ann Heiting & Bonnie Ramsey);* **Danielle Bradley** *(daughter of Ramona Shiffert, a friend of Kelsey Jones);* **Vicary Whitaker** *(sister of Edwa Meek);* **Jack Reeves** *(uncle of Mary Sue Lewis);* **Wayne Gunter** *(uncle of Tony Scott);* **Otis A. McCroskey** *(father of Christopher McCroskey);* **Connie Crouch** *(friend of Mary Sue Lewis);* **Kristie Carter** *(niece of Faye Grahl);* **George Hough** *(brother of Mary Louise Robinson);* **Donna Eidson** *(former Trinity pastor);* **Ghent Brewer** *(brother-in-law of Jeanette Hornsby);* **Matt Imel** *(husband of Holley Gleaton Imel);* **Cayla Watters** ***(friend of Karen Carter);*** **Tommy Stokes** *(nephew of Joyce Robinson);* **Christina Lindemuth** *(daughter of Karen Carter);* **Kathleen Varnadore** *(Ted & Ruth Frady's neighbor);* **Paul Frenzel** *(friend of Chris Derrick);* **Sissy Henry** *(former member of Trinity),* **Colby Martin** *(son of Donna Muszynski);* **Lynne Powell** *(friend of the Ballentines and Branhams);* **Bryan Collard** *(brother-in-law of Mary Sue Lewis);* **Mary Davis** (*daughter of Bob & Libby Strickland);* **Connie Mason** *(friend of Lynn Martin);* **Nancy Wilson** *(friend of Jeanette Hornsby);* **David & Kristen Turner** *(brother and sister-in-law of Pam Turner);* **Chip Mixon** *(friend of Tommy Gleaton);* **James Boggs** *(father of Claire Boggs);* **Robert Bradley** *(Business Associate of Simon Ross);* **Adrin & Linda Hargett** *(stepfather and stepmom of Christopher McCroskey);* **Haidee Baehr** *(friends of Ruth Frady);* **Denise Paul, Scott & Karen Nelson** *(cousins of Gale Frady);* **Dan Conner, Max Johnson** *(friends of Gale Frady);* **Janet Beck** *(friend of Jo Ann Heiting);* **Adam Lavender** *(son of Phil Lavender)*

**If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.**

***OUR PRESENCE ...***

**Attendance 09/20** SS: 14 Worship: 43

***OUR GIFTS ...***

**General Fund 09/20** $ 3,656.00

***OUR SERVICE…***
***OUR WITNESS."***

**Upcoming Events**

**TODAY** Taste of Trinity
Ministry Team Meeting
**09/28** Exercise, 10:30 a.m.
**09/29** Administrative Team Meeting, 6 p.m.
**09/30** T.a.G., 7 p.m.
**10/01** Exercise, 10:30 a.m.
**10/02** Office Closed

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# Trinity
United Methodist Church

| Ministers | The Congregation |
|---|---|
| Pastor | Darlene L. Kelley |
| Resident Bishop | Leonard Fairley |
| District Superintendent | Rev. Fran M. Elrod |

***Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.***

***Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform***

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**West Columbia, SC 29169**
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**E-mail: trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com**
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**Taste of Trinity**

Taste of Trinity, our church-wide covered dish luncheon, will be held **today** following the service**.** Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to share great food and fellowship!

**Please Note:** The Ministry Team will meet following Taste of Trinity.

**Trinity to Participate as a Vendor at the Saluda Riverfest**

Our church has purchased a table at the first annual Saluda Riverfest scheduled for October 8 from 5:30 until 8:30 p.m. at Saluda River Academy for the Arts.

We will give out business cards, water and candy and will have Taste of Trinity Cookbooks for sale for $5.00. This event is being held by the PTO to raise funds for student field trips, teacher support and classroom resources, and a brand new initiative that provides personal care items and clothing for students in need.

This is a great opportunity to get our name in front of one of our long-standing neighbors. If you can help "man" the booth with Darlene, please let her know.

There will be carnival games, food trucks, face painting, a cake walk, craft and and other vendors.

For more information about Saluda Riverfest, go to Saluda River Academy for the Arts Facebook page.

**Sunday, October 4**
**11 a.m.**

We once again invite you and your beloved pets to our Blessing of the Animals Worship Service on Sunday, October 4 at 11:00 a.m. Inspired by the birthday of St. Francis and adapted from our own United Methodist Book of Worship, this unique service is a wonderful way to celebrate the joy and companionship of our pets, and to thank God for all the wonderful gifts of Creation.

Whether your pet has fur, feathers or fins, all creatures are welcome! We'll gather outside (weather permitting) on the Gunter Circle side of the building for a time of prayer, reflection and blessing. A pet is not required for attendance; this is our Sunday worship service. Bring the whole family—some may require leashes or carriers. If your pet is unable to attend, please feel free to bring a photo, and we'll bless them in spirit. Blessing certificates with your pet's name will be available. Palmetto Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation (a non-profit rescue for orphaned and injured wildlife) will once again be joining us. A Love Offering will be taken up for them.

If you have a pop-up or canopy tarp that we might borrow for our outside service that day, please contact the church office at 803-794-7777 or email us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com. We'll also need three or four volunteers to set up chairs outside on the morning of the event.

Let's use this opportunity to invite friends, family and neighborhood animal lovers to this special worship event at our church! Say a prayer, spread the word and give God the glory!

If you have any questions, just ask Rev. Kelley at 845-416-7308. Thank you!

**Trinity UMC**
**September 27, 2026**
**Rev. Darlene L. Kelley**

***God's Will***

Have you ever joined a conversation well after it started and then realized that you're not quite sure what folks are talking about? Well, the lectionary puts us at a similar disadvantage this morning. For practical reasons, and to take us through the seasons of the church, the lectionary jumps around a bit. We don't follow a book of the Bible all the way through, so this morning—unless you're a really good Bible scholar—you may be wondering just what "these things" are that Jesus is doing, things that the elders and chief priests are disturbed about. They're questioning Jesus' authority to do "these things"—so we might start by asking ourselves just what "these things" are—and why "these things" have the religious authorities questioning Jesus' authority.

This morning's passage is from the 21st chapter of Matthew's Gospel, starting with the 23rd verse. If we'd been reading Matthew straight through, we'd know that at the top of the chapter—Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey and the people greet him with shouts of a "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" They lay palm branches down on the road and show the kind of excitement and enthusiasm that's generally reserved for a king. We read this story on Palm Sunday, but for the chief priests and elders of the temple—it has just unfolded. Matthew 21:10 tells us: *When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil.*

And the authorities in the ancient world didn't like "turmoil" in the streets leading to possible riots, so everybody is on edge since Jesus came to town.

And then to make it worse, after his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, Jesus enters the temple and drives out the moneychangers, overturning their tables and accusing them of turning God's house into a den of thieves (Matthew 21:12 & 13).

The authorities have Jesus on their enemies list in no time, but the lame, the blind, the poor and those seeking God are coming to him in droves. And Jesus is healing them and teaching them and comforting them.

And Matthew's 15th verse in this chapter tells us: *But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David", they became angry…"*

It is their anger and their worry over this rabble-rouser that leads them to this morning's question: *By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?*
What they are really saying is*: Hey, we're the Fat Cats in this Town Buddy. We run the show around here. Who told you to teach and heal and become a superstar to the people?*

But Jesus is too smart for them. He answers their question with a question and cuts them a deal. *I will also ask you one question,* he responds, *if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.* And then he asks them: *Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?*

The New Interpreter's Bible tells us that *Jesus' response is more than a clever strategic move. By mentioning John the Baptist, Jesus evokes the picture of the stream of prophets through Israel's history, the authentic bearers of God's Word, although rejected and killed by the people's leaders. Jesus identifies John (and himself) with this succession of "prophets from heaven", (sent by God) but rejected by "this generation"; but his opponents' teaching is "of human origin"—they do not teach with God-given authority but advocate human tradition.*

*In contrast to Jesus, the chief priests and elders do respond with strategy and expediency rather than with a concern for truth. They think over their alternatives, but Jesus knows their thoughts. Their alternatives are to acknowledge that John's mission was from God, or to claim that it was only of human origin—that (John the Baptist) was a false prophet.*

*In the first case, they then would have to explain why they had not accepted his message; in the second case, they would run afoul of the popular opinion of John the Baptist—that he was a true prophet. It is important for Matthew to show not only that the leaders are influenced by the crowd's opinion; since they seek popularity and are jealous of*

*Jesus but also that the crowd does indeed have influence and responsibility.* [1] The chief priests and elders decide that it is better not to answer at all. Either way—they're in trouble.

Their original question was not, of course, to gather information but a strategy to trap Jesus. They have now fallen into the trap themselves.

And as if to show them how deeply into the trap they have fallen, Jesus tells them a story. Two sons—both are invited to work in the vineyard. "Son, go and work in the vineyard today". And the first says, "I will not"—but later changes his mind, realizing perhaps that it was wrong to refuse his father. So, off to work in the vineyard he goes.

The second son agrees to work in the vineyard when his father asks, but then the minute his father's back is turned, the son goes off to do whatever he wants. "Which of these two", Jesus asks, "did the will of his father?"

The chief priests and elders have the answer to this one: "The first", they all say. But Jesus doesn't give them credit for the right answer. Instead, he points out their hypocrisy. *Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him* (Matt. 21:31c-32).

In Jesus' day tax collectors and prostitutes were the lowest of the low—perhaps, some things never change—at least when it comes to tax collectors. And once again, Jesus turns the whole world upside down, letting the most respected in society know that their wealth and power and authority in this world mean nothing to God. After all, Jesus hangs out with sinners just like us and often tells us it is the "least among us" that capture his heart, warning that the "first shall be last and the last first". The question for us is: am I following Jesus? Am I doing God's will? We are reminded once again that ego can lead us astray and that the Fat Cats on earth may not be the Fat Cats in the Kingdom of God. Every moment of our lives, we have a chance to choose love, to choose to surrender to God, to pray as Jesus taught us "let thy will be done".

As Baptist preacher Roger Lovette points out in his commentary on this passage in *The Christian Century* (and I usually don't quote Baptists, but this one is pretty cool and lives right here in South Carolina), this morning's story of the two sons is more than a condemnation of the elders and the chief priests, it's about all of us.

Pastor Lovette explains: *As Christians told and retold this story, it dawned on them that this was more than an attack on the leaders of the synagogue. They began to see that the great danger was no different for them than it was for the Pharisees. They knew it was easy to say "Lord, Lord," but not so easy to do what the Father asked. …This judgment,* Lovette declares, *is directed at all of us who claim the name Christian.*

*Are we the faithful or the unfaithful son? Both lied to the father. But one changed his mind and went to work while the other never followed through. Like the Pharisees we know the answer to Jesus' question -- the son who did what the father asked is the hero in this parable.*

*Who among us, however, has not been like that second son? We all know how hard it is to keep the promises we've made. The problem with living sacrifices is that they keep creeping off the altar. We all know about the creeping.*

*We would rather direct this parable to others. Lord knows we can point fingers. … But this parable is addressed to us….*

As Pastor Lovette explains: *It isn't only the Gandhis and the Rosa Parkses and the Mother Teresas who remind us all over again what faith and commitment are all about.*

He knows, as we all know in our hearts, that it is the little things that we do every day that make a difference, that bear witness to the name of Jesus and do God's will. And Pastor Lovette ends his commentary with a story I can't help sharing though it may be a bit dated now. Lovette writes: *My son sent me a bulletin from the Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia. One Sunday he stood in a long line of visitors to listen to Jimmy Carter teach Sunday school. He stayed for the worship service and sent me the program for the day. My eye stopped at this notice in the bulletin: Rosalynn Carter will clean the church next Saturday. Jimmy Carter will cut the grass and trim the shrubbery.*

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1 New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VIII, page 410.

*It's not always the one who talks or preaches or teaches who reflects the will of God. Sometimes it is the one who shows up on a hot Saturday afternoon to dust the pews, take out the trash, cut the grass -- making the world a little better in the name of Jesus* [2].

Will you pray with me?

God of Love, help us to do your will in every aspect of our lives, so that all we do honors and glorifies your name. Amen.

2 Roger Lovette, *The Christian Century*, "Showing Up: Matthew 21:23-32, September 20, 2005, online resource.