

Clifton Presbyterian Church is a welcoming Christian Community driven by compassion, generosity, resilience and service to others.

Breath Prayer:

INHALE: Seen or unseen, EXHALE: O God, you are here.



Esther by Sarah Beth Baca Art sarahbethart.com

September 20, 2026
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER TOGETHER TO WORSHIP GOD

*Words in **BOLD** indicate the congregation reading together. Words of the worship leader are in PLAIN type. An asterisk * indicates that the congregation may stand, as you wish.*

Gathering Song GtG 392 *Jesus, We Are Here*

Jesus, we are here. Jesus, we are here.
Jesus, we are here, we are here for you.

Savior, we are here... Spirit, we are here...

Time of Prayer and Care

Prelude

*** Call to Worship** *from Psalm 118*

One: Give thanks to the LORD, for God is good!

All: God's steadfast love endures forever.

One: This is the day that the LORD has made;

All: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

***Presbyterian Hymnal 467 How Great Thou Art**

Oh Lord, my God

When I, in awesome wonder

Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder

Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee

How great Thou art, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee

How great Thou art, how great Thou art

Prayer of Confession

One: The grace of God overflows for us through Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. Trusting in God's grace, let us confess our sin. Let us pray.

All: Holy and merciful God, in your presence we confess our failure to be what you created us to be. You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love. By your loving mercy, help us to live in your light and abide in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Assurance of God's Grace

One: The LORD is compassionate and merciful, very patient, and full of faithful love.

He doesn't deal with us according to our sin or repay us according to our wrongdoing. As high as heaven is above the earth, that's how large God's faithful love is for those who honor him. As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us... The LORD's faithful love is from forever ago to forever from now

All: Thanks be to God for God's goodness and grace!

Sing Glory GtG 582 Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me

Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me,

and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me,

and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. Amen.

The Peace of Christ

One: Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us share signs of reconciliation and peace. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us share that peace with one another.

*Those in the sanctuary are invited to greet those around you.
Those on zoom are invited to offer greetings in the chat.*

Offering our Gifts to God

For those who would like to make a physical offering, the offering plates are available in the middle of the sanctuary. Donations can also be made online. www.cliftonpc.org

One: All we have is a gift from God. Let us return to God the offerings of our life and the gifts of the earth. Let us pray.

All: Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love; through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

WE HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

Anthem

Prayer for Illumination PH 339 Be Thou My Vision v.2
**Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true Word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower;
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.**

Scripture Reading Esther 5:1-8; 9-14; 6:1-12; 7:1-10 (NRSVUE)

^{5:1} Three days later, Esther put on royal clothes and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, facing the palace itself. At that moment the king was inside sitting on his royal throne and facing the palace doorway. ² When the king noticed Queen Esther standing in the entry court, he was pleased. The king held out to Esther the gold scepter in his hand, and she came forward and touched the scepter's tip. ³ Then the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What do you want? I'll give you anything—even half the kingdom." ⁴ Esther answered, "If the king wishes, please come today with Haman for the feast that I have prepared for him." ⁵ "Hurry, get Haman," the king ordered, "so we can do what Esther says." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. ⁶ As they sipped wine, the king asked, "Now what is it you wish? I'll give it to you. What do you want? I'll do anything—even give you half the kingdom." ⁷ Esther answered, "This is my wish and this is what I want: ⁸ If I please the king, and if the king wishes to grant my wish and my desire, I'd like the king and Haman to come to another feast that I will prepare for them. Tomorrow I will answer the king's questions."

⁹ That day Haman left Esther's place happy, his spirits high, but then he saw Mordecai in the King's Gate. Mordecai neither stood up nor seemed the least bit nervous around him, so Haman suddenly felt great rage toward Mordecai. ¹⁰ But Haman held himself back and went on home. He sent word that his friends and his wife Zeresh should join him there. ¹¹ Haman boasted to them about his great wealth and his many sons. He told all about how the king had honored him by promoting him over the officials and high royal workers. ¹² "Best of all," Haman said, "Queen Esther has invited no one else but me to join the king

for food and drinks that she has prepared. In fact, I've been called to join the king at her place tomorrow! ¹³ But all this loses its meaning every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate." ¹⁴ So his wife Zeresh and all his friends told him: "Have people prepare a pointed pole seventy-five feet high. In the morning, tell the king to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then you can go with the king to the feast in a happy mood." Haman liked the idea and had the pole prepared.

6 That same night, the king simply couldn't sleep. He had the official royal records brought in, and his young male servants began reading them to the king. ² They came to the report about Mordecai informing on Bigthan and Teresh. (They were the two royal eunuchs among the guards protecting the king's doorway, who secretly planned to kill King Ahasuerus.) ³ "What was done to honor and reward Mordecai for this?" the king asked. His young male servants replied, "Nothing was done for him, sir." ⁴ "Who is that out in the courtyard?" the king asked. (Haman had just entered the outer courtyard of the palace. He had come to tell the king to impale Mordecai on the pole that he had set up for him.) ⁵ The king's servants answered, "That's Haman standing out in the courtyard, sir." So the king said, "Have him come in." ⁶ When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man whom the king really wants to honor?" Haman thought to himself, Whom would the king really want to honor more than me? ⁷ So Haman said to the king, "Here's what should be done for the man the king really wants to honor. ⁸ Have servants bring out a royal robe that the king himself has worn and a horse on which the king himself has ridden. It should have a royal crest on its head. ⁹ Then hand over the robe and the horse to another man, one of the king's officials. Have him personally robe^[a] the man whom the king really wants to honor and lead him on the horse through the city square. As he goes, have him shout, 'This is what the king does for the man he really wants to honor!'" ¹⁰ Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse just as you've said and do exactly that for Mordecai the Jew, who works at the King's Gate. Don't leave out a single thing you've said!" ¹¹ So Haman took the robe and the horse and put the robe on Mordecai. He led him on horseback through the city square, shouting as he went, "This is what the king does for the man he really wants to honor!" ¹² Afterward, Mordecai returned to the King's Gate, while Haman hurried home feeling great shame, his head covered.

7 When the king and Haman came in for the banquet with Queen Esther, ² the king said to her, "This is the second day we've met for wine. What is your wish, Queen Esther? I'll give it to you. And what do you want? I'll do anything—even give you half the kingdom." ³ Queen Esther answered, "If I please the king, and if the king wishes, give me my life—that's my wish—and the lives of my people too. That's my desire. ⁴ We have been sold—I and my people—to be wiped out, killed, and destroyed. If we simply had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have said nothing. But no enemy can compensate the king for this kind of damage." ⁵ King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is this person, and where is he? Who would dare do such a thing?" ⁶ Esther replied, "A man who hates, an enemy—this wicked Haman!" Haman was overcome with terror in the presence of the king and queen. ⁷ Furious, the king got up and left the banquet for the palace garden. But Haman stood up to beg Queen Esther for his life. He saw clearly that the king's mood meant a bad end for him. ⁸ The king returned from the palace garden to the banquet room just as Haman was kneeling on the couch where Esther was reclining.

“Will you even molest the queen while I am in the house?” the king said. The words had barely left the king’s mouth before covering Haman’s face with dread. ⁹ Harbona, one of the eunuchs serving the king, said, “Sir, look! There’s the stake that Haman made for Mordecai, the man who spoke up and did something good for the king. It’s standing at Haman’s house—seventy-five feet high.” “Impale him on it!” the king ordered. ¹⁰ So they impaled Haman on the very pole that he had set up for Mordecai, and the king’s anger went away.

Sermon

Diane Walton Hendricks

**More Than Meets the Eye: Discovering God at Work in Esther
How We See**

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD AND ARE SENT TO THE WORLD

Presbyterian Hymnal 461

God Is Here *vv 1, 4*

**God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.**

**Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive:
we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!**

Prayers of the People and the Lord’s Prayer

**All: 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead
us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

Minute for Ministries

Ringling of the Bell

Charge and Benediction

Benediction Response GtG 543

O Christ, Surround Me *vv 1, 4*

**God, be the love to search and keep me; God, be the prayer to move my voice;
God, be the strength to now uphold me:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.**

**Walking behind to hem my journey, going ahead to light my way,
and from beneath, above, and all ways:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me.**

Thank you for joining us for worship this morning. We can be reached at office@cliftonpc.org

Liturgy from PSUSA Book of Common Worship

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from One License #A- 721138 and CCLI License 20618208.

Thanks to those leading us in worship

Hosts: Pat Swanson and Barbara Brown

Prayer Notetaker: Rene Law

Liturgist: Jen Basham

Technical Team: Jeff Dohse

Mission Elder: Kimberly Davis

Nursery Volunteer: Lynne Coyle

Sanctuary Flowers: Mary and John McKey in memory of Frances McKey

CPC STAFF

Rev. Dr. Diane Walton Hendricks, Pastor | John Kim, Music Director

Hannah Harris, Lead Vocalist | Debbie Kilpatrick, Office Administrator

Kate Trussell, Preschool Director | Sue Ferguson, Director of Community Outreach and

Intergenerational Ministry | Rev. Dr. Lynn Stanton-Hoyle, Pastor Emerita