

Look Forward

Welcome to Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

Thank you for worshiping with us at Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ (ERUCC) this morning. We extend a special welcome to our guests.

If you are a guest, please visit us at the Welcome Table in the sanctuary lobby. We would love to meet and learn more about you and are available to answer your questions about ERUCC. Please also feel free to reach out to someone sitting near you and ask them questions about the service or church. We encourage you to join us for in the Community Room for Fellowship after the worship service for casual conversation and connection over light refreshments.

ERUCC is an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ. We welcome into the full life and ministry persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

For Children: We have trained nursery staff for ages 0-4. A deacon or greeter can guide you to the nursery. Children ages 5 and above are invited to stay and worship with their families. Children's programs, books, and crayons are in the rear of the sanctuary near the welcome table and a children's table is available for quiet activities at the front of the sanctuary.

We ask that you **please silence your cell phones** during our worship service. We also ask that you refrain from applause after our choirs sing and allow the music to resonate in the quiet of the sanctuary and in your hearts. Our musicians are playing and singing for the glory of God. They know you appreciate their efforts and their gift.

Restrooms, accessible and equipped with changing stations, are located on the 2nd floor, below the sanctuary, and on the 1st floor, outside the Community Room. Single-occupant, all-gender, accessible restrooms are located outside the North and Flora Rooms on the 2nd floor.

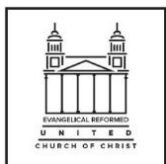
There is more information about our church in this bulletin and on our website: www.erucc.org.

Mission Statement of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

We, the members of this congregation, seek to celebrate in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ, by nurturing spiritual growth through worship, study and prayer; by caring for one another as God cares for us; and by proclaiming God's love for all people as we work to help our neighbors near and far.

We commit ourselves to develop and implement specific programs to fulfill our mission.

15 WEST CHURCH STREET, FREDERICK, MD 21701
(301) 662-2762 • erucc@erucc.org • www.erucc.org



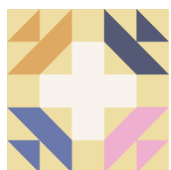
EVANGELICAL REFORMED
United Church of Christ
– An Open and Affirming Congregation –



December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

10:30 AM



**DO THE GOOD THAT
IS YOURS TO DO**

The numbered hymns are from
The New Century Hymnal
*All who are able may stand

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

PRELUDE

THRESHOLD MOMENT

Harvest

Tyler L. York
– Rev. Sarah Speed

Maybe none of it matters.

Maybe you can't make a difference.

Or maybe that watermelon seed you spit out over the summer will grow into a green orb, full of sticky sweet fruit. Maybe the rain will nourish it.

Maybe your mother's hands will pull it from the vine, slice it into wedges, and place it on the dining room table. Maybe the neighbors will come over and chomp into that soft pink fruit, juicy water running down their chins.

Maybe you will laugh at the shared experience, at this garden-grown communion, and maybe the stars will shine brighter that night.

People say the problems of the world are too big to make a difference, but surely those people have forgotten the fruit that grows from one little seed.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

“Teacher,” the crowd asked, “What should we do?”

If you have two shirts, give one away.

Hold onto hope. Live like we belong to one another.

Speak the truth. Look for God.

Do the good that is yours to do.

It's all that easy, and it's all that hard.

Let us worship our present and active God.

***OPENING PRAYER**

Listening God, we know that you are constantly speaking to us. Through music, scripture, nature, and relationships, you make yourself known again and again. In gratitude, we long to return the favor. In gratitude, we long to meet you halfway. So in this moment, we are quieting the noise in our heads. We are closing our eyes. We are leaning in. We are listening. We are doing the good that is ours to do. Speak to us through the chaos. Speak to us as only you can do. With hope in our hearts we listen and we pray. Amen.

***LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF JOY**

Laurel, Emma

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again?

Where do we start?

Let us start small.

Let us begin with what is right in front of us.

Let us do the good that is ours to do, and let us do it with joy!

Yes, let us begin with joy.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy.

May these lights remind us of what could be.

May these lights inspire action.

May the warmth of these lights fill us with joy. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN**

With Joy Draw Water from the Well

#109

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well.

The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell!

A shoot has sprung from Jesse's tree; of God the chosen One.

A branch of knowledge and of truth; a gift of love has come!

With love the poor will be received; the proud will turn aside;

And faithfulness will be a path, and righteousness the guide!

The wolf shall lie down with the lamb; the calf and lion play,

God's peace shall dwell within the land; a child shall show the way!

With joy draw water from the spring; salvation's living well.

The Holy One is in your midst; glad praises sing and tell!

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

Friends, there are times when the weight of the world can feel so heavy on us. Fortunately, when we come before God in confession, God removes that weight. God sees our shame, our guilt, our sin, and offers us grace. Join me in the prayer of confession. Come and allow yourself to be freed. Come and allow yourself to begin again. Let us pray:

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Liberating God, there are days when the world feels like it's crumbling.
There are days when we doubt that we can make a difference.
We ask ourselves, what could our two hands do?
What could our voice say?
Shake us free of our paralysis and self-doubt.
Remind us that we are not called to fix everything.
We are simply called to do the good that is ours to do.
With hope in our hearts and fire in our bones, we pray. Amen.**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Friends, no matter how many times we lose momentum, doubt our own ability, or tell ourselves that the problems of the world are simply too big, God sees what we cannot see. God calls us by name, surrounds us in grace, and invites us to begin again. Trusting in this good news, join me in proclaiming these words of forgiveness:

We are loved. We are forgiven. We are invited to do the good that is ours to do. Thanks be to God for this new beginning. Amen.

ANTHEM

Sing a Song of Joy

Young Spirit
– Pete Carlson

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

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

*Children aged 5 through 5th grade who wish to participate in **Junior Church** may meet leaders at the back of the sanctuary and proceed to the Thomas Room.*

*Youth participating in the **Young Spirit Choir** are dismissed at this time for an additional rehearsal in the Marj Menchey Berkheimer Music Suite.*

Children and Youth will return to their families in worship by 11:30 AM.

THE SCRIPTURES

Tyler L. York

Isaiah 58:9b-12 OT page 688

Luke 3:7-16 NT page 60

Reader: May God bless the reading of this word.

All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan

MORNING PRAYERS

OFFERING OF TITHES, GIFTS AND LIVES TO CHRIST'S SERVICE

Embracing radical joy transforms our spirits, creating a gentle energy within us. We are renewed, and we sense God's call more clearly. In seeking God's message, we know how to joyfully share our talents, treasures, and time, bringing more peace and comfort into our world.

This is a time in our service when we respond to God's gifts of love by offering the gifts of our lives. For many of us, this is when we make a financial gift to our church's ministries and programs. We also use this time to ask God how we might use the gifts of our hands and hearts to share God's love. If you are visiting, there is no obligation to give a financial gift. We are just glad you are worshipping with us.

If you wish to give, you can give online at www.erucc.org, by placing your gift in the offering plates in the rear of the sanctuary before or after the service, or by scanning the QR code to give from your phone.



CANTATA

I Hear the Prophet Callin'

Senior Choir
– Pepper Choplin

Listen to the Story

Listen to the story, hear the story, of His birth.

Listen, God is coming, God is coming to the earth.

Listen, hear the story told so many times before. Listen, and be open.

We are open to the Lord.

For unto us a Son is given, for unto us a Child is born to all.
His government shall be upon His shoulders, He is called Emmanuel.
God is with us.

Ready, make ready, for the blessed things in store.
Ready, come make ready for the coming of the Lord.

For unto us a Son is given, for unto us a Child is born to all.
His government shall be upon His shoulders, He is called Emmanuel.
God is with us.

Come and listen to God's holy word.
God is speaking, open hearts are stirred.
Come prepare to celebrate, ready, we anticipate glorious things to come.

Listen, come and to the story like you've never heard before.
Listen to the story of the coming of the Lord.
Joy to the world. Get ready, the Lord will come.

I Hear the Prophet Callin'

I hear the prophet callin', "Prepare the way of the Lord."

Come and make straight the way in the desert, a highway for our God. Come and
make straight the way in the desert, prepare the way of the Lord.

I hear Isaiah callin', "Fear not, your God will come."

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf will hear.

And then the mute will shout for joy. They'll be shouting for joy.

And the desert will be joyful, and blossom as a rose.

We shall rejoice with joy and singing, and see the glory of God.

I hear the prophet callin', "Prepare the way of the Lord."

The People Who Walk in Darkness

The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light.

Now, lift up your eyes, see the glory of the Lord,
and all flesh will see it together.

The people who have walked in darkness,
they have seen a wondrous light.

And all who live in death's dark shadow,
rise and shine, light has come.

The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light.

Now, lift up your eyes, see the glory of the Lord,
and all flesh will see it together.

Arise and shine, your light has come to the people who walk in darkness.

I Hear a Mother Singin'

I hear a mother singin' a tender lullaby. I hear a mother singin'.

Rockin' Slow and Even

Now Mary holds her tiny child, her precious gift from heaven.
His cradle is her loving arms, she's rockin' slow and even.
Now, underneath her gentle breath, there's quiet jubilation.
She hums a grateful melody. She's rockin' slow and even.
She dreams of all He'll grow to be, all the hope and joy that He will bring, to
touch the world, to show the world holy love and blessing.
The rising and the falling of His chest,
breathing in a calm and peaceful rest.
She feels the rhythm. His tiny heart beats with love from heaven.
She feels the baby fall asleep, she hears the peaceful breathing.
Though He's asleep, still she will stay.
She's rockin' slow, and singin' low, she's rockin' slow and even.

There in the Same Country

There, in the same country, shepherds guarded o'er their sheep.
When they heard the angel speak, they were sore afraid.
The angel said, "Fear not, I come to you bringing great and joyous news. Now a
savior's born to you down in Bethlehem.
He is Christ, the Lord, He is Christ, the holy Lord."
This shall be to you a sign: wrapped in swaddling clothes
you'll find there the holy Child reclines, lying in a manger.
And there, right before their very eyes, heaven's angels filled the skies, from the
holy host would rise a joyous proclamation.
And they said, "Glory to God." They said, "Glory to our God on high."
The shepherds went to Bethlehem, and found the Baby at the inn.
They bowed low to worship Him.
O come, let us adore Him, Christ, the Lord.
There, in the same country, shepherds bowed to worship the newborn King.

I Hear the Shepherds Callin'

I hear the shepherds callin', "Rejoice, for Christ is born."

Go Tell It

Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!
Now all God's people say,
"Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born."

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens, there shown a holy light, a light, see the light.
Now all God's people say,
"Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born."

Down in a lowly manger, the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. He's born, Christ is born.
Now all God's people say,
"Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born."

Go, tellin' it, go, singin' it, O my, what a beautiful noise.
Go, shoutin' it, go, preachin' it, go, tell it at the top of your voice.
Now all God's people say,
"Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born."

I See the Star of Glory

I see the star of glory arisin' in the east.
And I know the star will lead me unto the Prince of Peace.

A Star Rising in the East

A star rising in the east, a messenger of holy peace.
A star shining o'er the earth, the herald of a royal birth.
Upon the darkness shines a light, and from the Lord, there comes a sign.
Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call His name, Emmanuel."

A star of heavenly design revealing hope to humankind.
A star, a witness of His care, the answer to the ancient prayer.
For unto us a Child is born, for unto us a Son is given.
The government shall be upon His shoulder.
He shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God,
the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

A star, shining through the night, illumining the Way, the Truth, the Life.

I Hear the People Singin'

I hear the people singin', "Rejoice the Lord is come."
We shall rejoice with joy and singing and see the glory of the Lord.
We shall rejoice with joy and singing and see the glory of God.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: Let earth receive her King.
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heav'n and nature sing.
No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.
He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness,
and wonders of His love.
Joy to the world! Rejoice, the Lord is come!

***CLOSING PRAYER**

God of All Joy, we give of our full hearts, knowing that you will bless this world with love. We give of our full minds, knowing that you will bless this world with peace. We give of our full souls, knowing that you will bless this world with hope. May the joy of your gifts encourage us to share the best we have, creating your Realm here on earth. Amen.

***BENEDICTION**

As you leave this place,
may you have the wisdom to lean on one another.
May you have the courage to hold onto hope,
the compassion to do the good that is yours to do,
and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing.
For in a world full of dead ends,
Advent invites us to begin again.
Start here. Start now.
Start with love and begin again.
In the name of Christ, our new beginning, go in peace. **Amen.**

POSTLUDE *Please remain seated*



Worship Notes: Liturgy by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. Offering prayers written by the Rev. Michelle L. Torigian, senior pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois.

About the Cantata: Gifted composer Pepper Choplin is widely celebrated for creating refreshingly different, original anthems that resonate with traditional folk qualities. Inspired by his best-selling Appalachian-style anthem of the same name, Choplin crafted a stylized Christmas cantata that is unique and unusual, yet very comfortable and compatible, the perfect way to celebrate the simplicity of Christmas!

Please join us for **Fellowship** with light refreshments and time for casual conversation after worship in our Community Room (1st Floor).

The flowers on the altar are given by Andy and Kathy Johnston in honor of their eight grandchildren: Hannah, Emma, Mady, Cole, Hayden, Zoe, Ryder, and Hazel.

The yellow rose is presented by John Stush in memory of his brother, Gerald Stush, US Air Force.

Attendance Last Sunday: 15 at 8:30 AM, 158 at 10:30 AM, and 50 online.



Watch worship live every Sunday at 10:30 AM or on-demand:

<https://sundaystreams.com/go/ERUCC>

Serving Today: December 15

Deacons: Harrison Fisher, Kyle Miller
Elder: Jeanellen Kallevang
Scripture Reader: Tyler L. York
Acolyte: Laurel
Greeters: Felecia Bishop, Rob Peters
Tom Ford, Rachel Ford
Welcome Table: Jeanellen Kallevang
Lobby Attendant: Andrew Beadle
Audio/Visual: Rodney Martin, Jeff Schaeberle
Kelly Esslinger
Nursery: Stephanie Fisher, Felecia Bishop
Fellowship: Karen Justice, Marj Berkheimer
Peter Brehm, Kate Fromknecht
Rob McGuire, Alex Martinez

Serving Next Week: December 22

Jim Brittain, Angela Brittain
Matt Huetting
Young Adults
Wyatt
Robert Manthey, Nancy Manthey
Niel Jefferson, Kathleen Jefferson
Thi Nguyen, Betsy Selby
Starr Schaeberle
Jeff Schaeberle, Larry Martin
Jeff Baker
Linda Coyle, Tommie Bradshaw
Shelley Weakly, Eric Weakly
Collen Baldree, Chuck Baldree

Next Sunday: December 22 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Hope is Worth the Risk

Hope is vulnerable and can feel like a tremendous risk, especially if you've experienced loss or trauma. But Mary shows us a resilient hope that takes risks—she risks her body to bear a son who will become the hope of her people. Similarly, Joseph makes a risky choice to stay with Mary; dismissing her quietly would have kept him safe. But instead, he chooses hope. He chooses to trust the angel, and it makes all the difference. It can feel safer and easier to be a cynic, but the world doesn't need more cynics. It needs people who say, "It can be better," and make it so.

*Today, we celebrate our annual **lessons and carols service** with our college students reading the scriptures. The Senior Choir will be singing. The Cambridge Handbell and Chancel Handbell choirs will share special music.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASTORAL CARE

Evangelical Reformed UCC wants to be there for you when you're experiencing an illness, hospitalization, or other life event for which you, or someone you love, may need a visit.

Members who are in nursing homes and those who currently reside in their homes but are unable to come to regular Sunday morning services will receive visits (and communion) from Rev. Dr. Morgan. Our Faithful Friends Team also makes visits, calls, and sends care cards.

If emergency pastoral care is needed in the case of crisis, death, or severe illness, please contact the church office at (301) 662-2762 or erucc@erucc.org.

PRAYER LIST

We always ask permission before adding a name to the prayer list or in the verbal announcements on a Sunday morning. There are many for whom we pray and visit whose names are not listed in the bulletin by their request.

Please remember the following people in your prayers:

Gail Ellam
Charlene Perry
Greg Alley
Dave Alley
Sue Stevens (friend of Susan Kulp)
Kitty Bradley
Beanie Cornell
Raymond Slifer (father of Robin A. Brady-Slifer)
The Black Family
Susan Bonhag (friend of the Mercier family)
Milt Crutchley
Father of Sherry Murray
Craig, Carrie, Aaron, Chase and Maddy Percopo (friends of Lois Gaul)
Kat Weedon (friend of Jean Fish & Barb Biser)
Tom Frazier
Kayla Merry (niece of Kim Sexton)
Carol Spera (mother of Mark Ulrich)

Pauline Marendt
Haley Duff
Sherry Murray
Charlotte Blue and Family (friends of Jean Fish & Barb Biser)
Emogene Wyand
Bob Pinner
Delmar Speak
Donna Hill (mother of Collen Baldree)
Philip Hill (father of Colleen Baldree)
Tanya Pearre (sister of Colleen Baldree)
Jim Baldree (father of Chuck Baldree)
Anne Gallagher (friend of Milt and Bettie Joe Crutchley)
Lee Thomas
Joan Thomas (mother of Dan Smith's friend)
Autumn Crutchley
Jason Rhoads
Nathan Cable
Greg Rhoads

Marcia Eisenstein
Derek C. Hupp (grandson of Beanie & Gaylon Cornell)
Wayne Kolb (friend of Stefan and Judi Mach and Tony and Linda LaFianza)
Jeannette Johnson
Jackie Keyser (sister-in-law of Betsy and Phil Selby)
Barbara Lee Crutchley (sister of Milt Crutchley)
Marcy Channell (daughter of Jo Ann Fritz)
Paige Coffey
Fran Wenner
Bonnie Devilbiss
Tina Prescott (daughter-in-law of Barbara & Bill Prescott)
Heleen (sister of Karin Mens)
Kathy Blue Shores (friend of Jean Fish & Barb Biser)
Gretchen Manuel (niece of Audrey Rayfield)

Cards invited: Kitty Bradley
3990 Farm Lane
Monrovia, MD 21770

Adult Christian Education Opportunities

BIBLE STUDIES for ADULTS

SUNDAY MORNING LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE

with Revs. John and Rebecca Shillingburg
North Room / Zoom, 9:00 – 10:15 AM

Zoom: bit.ly/ERSunstudy
Meeting ID: 893 8670 5888
Passcode: 327128

TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary Behind the Church's Conservative Icon
with Rev. Rebecca Shillingburg
North Room / Zoom, 11:00 AM

Zoom: bit.ly/ERTuesday
Meeting ID: 875 1423 3398
Passcode: 973365

WEDNESDAY EVENING LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE

with Rev. John Shillingburg
North Room / Zoom, 7:00 PM

Zoom: bit.ly/ERWedstudy
Meeting ID: 892 1764 4500
Passcode: 848933

LET'S TALK

Let's Talk is an adult educational opportunity that focuses on how we can live out our faith and share our knowledge and expertise. Contact Linda Coyle, lkcoyle@yahoo.com with questions or ideas for a presentation.

Q&A with the T Team

Sunday, December 15
Community Room, 9:30 AM – 10:15 AM

Join the Transition Team for a Q&A session in the **Community Room**. Bring your questions as we continue to navigate this exciting interim journey together!

Let's Talk will take a break on December 22 and 29.

The Story Behind the Frederick Community Fridge

Sunday, January 5
Flora Room, 9:30 AM – 10:15 AM



Have you noticed that ERUCC has a refrigerator and pantry shelves in our parking lot? Are you wondering what's up with that? Come find out more and get your questions answered on January 5.

The Frederick Community Fridge & Outreach invites community members to participate in a presentation and open discussion about the services offered. You can find out more about the project at <https://linktr.ee/frederickcommunityfridge>.

Activities and Events at ERUCC

INTERGENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Sunday, December 15

Sanctuary, 6:30 PM

Join us tonight for a joyful and heartwarming Christmas Pageant at 6:30 PM! This year, we're bringing the story of Jesus' birth to life with a rehearsal-free, interactive, and family-friendly program that includes humor, music, and plenty of opportunities for everyone to participate. As you arrive, you'll be invited to select costumes—whether as an angel, shepherd, or even a barn animal—and help bring the Christmas story to life. Together, we will sing carols, create a live nativity, and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Whether you enjoy singing, acting out the nativity scenes, or simply watching the Christmas story unfold, this pageant is sure to fill your heart with the spirit of the season. It's a perfect way to gather as a church family and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas together!

Following the pageant, we invite everyone to stay for a brief time of fellowship, where we'll share cookies, enjoy each other's company, and reflect on the joy this season brings.

The Pageant is open to all ages, so bring along your friends, family, and neighbors for a festive evening full of laughter, love, and the warmth of our church community. We can't wait to see you there as we enter the Christmas season with joy and celebration!

Contact: Trish Coffey, trishcoffey1195@gmail.com or (240) 815-9118.

MID-WEEK ADVENT SERIES: *EMBODIED LIGHT*

Wednesday, December 18

Sanctuary/Community Room, 12:00 PM

This Advent season, we invite you to a journey of reflection, worship, and connection inspired by *Embodied Light* by Melissa Tidwell. *Embodied Light* is a thoughtful exploration of the Christian concept of incarnation—God taking on human form in the person of Jesus, and focuses on how our bodies, as well as the material world, are sacred and central to our faith journeys.

Weekly Gatherings:

- **Worship:** Brief, meaningful 20-minute services in the Sanctuary led by Pastor Kirstin.
- **Fellowship:** Services will be followed by a cozy soup lunch in the Community Room.
- **Week 3 Theme:** *Song and Breath*

Come, let us embrace the beauty of our incarnate lives and prepare our hearts together for the mystery of Christmas.

CAROLING NIGHT: A FESTIVE EVENING FOR ADULTS

Wednesday, December 18

Community Room, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Get ready for a memorable night of caroling, food, and fun—just for ERUCC adults! Join us for a special evening filled with holiday cheer, music, and community. It's the perfect way to celebrate the season with your church family!

What's Happening:

- **Caroling:** Raise your voice and spread the holiday spirit with our church community.
- **Food & Drinks:** Enjoy delicious food and a festive drink selection, including beer and non-alcoholic options.
- **Suggested Donation:** \$10 at the door gets you food and one drink. Additional drinks are available to purchase by donation.

This event is for ERUCC adults (ages 21 and older)—so bring your holiday spirit, your best caroling voice, and your friends! We can't wait to sing, feast, and celebrate the season with you.

LONGEST NIGHT

Thursday, December 19

Sanctuary, 7:30 PM

Although Advent is a joyful season for so many, we also know that this time of year can be drenched in fatigue, grief, and loneliness. We will gather as a community to honor that reality and draw near to God to allow space for healing and prayer.

Bring your grief. Bring your weariness. Bring your fatigue. We hope this time of worship can be a gift to individuals and communities alike, providing a calm, quiet, and healing space. May you find peace in your journey.

EVENING ADVENT VIDEO DEVOTIONS

This Advent season, join us each evening for *Words for the Beginning: Advent Reminders for New Seasons*, a special series of video reflections inspired by our worship liturgy from Sanctified Art. These devotions invite us to reflect on the words Mary might have whispered to her newborn, filled with hope and the promise that God is making all things new.

These 3–5 minute reflections, shared by members of our congregation, will be shared nightly on our YouTube channel. Each video offers music, poetry, art, or personal testimony inspired by a meaningful word for this Advent season.

Watch the videos and journey with us through Advent by visiting our YouTube playlist: bit.ly/adventwords24



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Tuesday, December 24



Christ's birth makes the vastness of God personal. The God who made the seas and the stars is also the God who made your beautiful hair and your striking eyes. The God of creation takes on flesh, which means you are fully known. When the angels visit the shepherds in the fields, their message is global but also personal: "To you . . . a

savior is born." This birth is good news for everyone, especially those who are ignored or disenfranchised. On this night, God is born, and this God of love knows your name.

5:30 PM Children's Service – Sanctuary

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads will be leading worship.

7:30 PM Family Candlelight & Carol Service – Sanctuary and Online at www.erucc.org

An elegant telling of the Christmas story in carols and readings with music from the Senior Choir and featured music from brass, culminating in the singing of "Silent Night" in our candle-lit sanctuary.

10:30 PM Communion and Candlelight Service – Sanctuary

The Revs. John and Rebecca Shillingburg will be leading worship.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING



For over one hundred years, The Christmas Fund has provided direct financial assistance to the healers in all our lives: retired and active United Church of Christ ministers, church workers, and their families. You are part of the community of The Christmas Fund, whether you donate at Christmastime, benefit directly from our grant or leadership programs, or simply believe in our mission to help secure the financial foundation of those engaged in the life of the church.

Please consider donating to ensure more healers receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need. Your gift is more than just a testament to your belief in the values of the United Church of Christ, it is a critical lifeline for those who depend on our grant programs for care and support. Thank you again for your generosity.

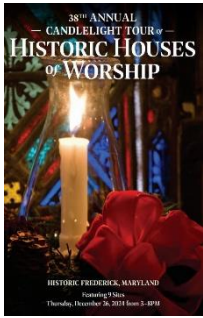
Make your gift to The Christmas Fund with the special giving envelopes or online at <https://ppay.co/rVwrOquvKIg>.



CANDLELIGHT TOUR OF HISTORIC HOUSES OF WORSHIP

Thursday, December 26

3:00 – 8:00 PM



The beloved Candlelight Tour of Historic Houses of Worship returns this holiday season in Downtown Frederick. This special open house celebrates Frederick's tradition of religious diversity, local history, and the holiday season on Thursday, December 26, from 3:00 – 8:00 PM. This is Frederick's most popular church tour and is a great opportunity to step inside some of its most beautiful buildings.

We will open our main building at 15 West Church Street to thousands of visitors! We will be offering refreshments and our wonderful hospitality.

We need your help to share our radical hospitality!

Interested in volunteering? Sign up: bit.ly/cndltour24

Contact: Julie Clark, Jclarkad@yahoo.com.



CALL FOR CONGREGATIONAL NAME SUGGESTIONS

On Sunday, October 13, 2024 the congregation voted in favor of a motion *“to consider changing its name from 'Evangelical Reformed' to another name, to be voted on at a later date. The new name will retain 'United Church of Christ,' with the understanding that the congregation may also choose to retain 'Evangelical Reformed' as the name.”*

Submit names you wish to be considered for the congregation in a digital suggestion box at bit.ly/3Y7nPcd or the designated suggestion box in the Sanctuary Lobby.



GENTLE YOGA

Tuesdays

Trinity Chapel, 7:00 PM

Experience tranquility and wellness in this Gentle Yoga Class. Led by experienced Yogamour instructors, this nurturing practice focuses on gentle postures, mindful breathing, and deep relaxation techniques. Participants of all levels are welcome.

Each drop-in class is \$10. Questions? Contact Renae, rdkline15@gmail.com.

To access the yoga classroom in Trinity Chapel, walk through the gate to the left of the building, down the walkway to the side door, and into the hallway leading to the classroom.



God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

FRANKLINTON CENTER TRIP PREP MEETING

Sunday, January 5

Community Room, 11:45 AM – 12:15 PM

Adults, youth and their parents who will be attending the work trip to Franklinton Center at Bricks should attend. We will discuss expectations, work assignments, travel, packing, and food menu.

FRANKLINTON CENTER WORK TRIP

Open to adults and youth (6th – 12th grade)

January 18 – 20

Please let Pastor Kirstin know if you are interested in going on the work trip to The Franklinton Center at Bricks, a conference, retreat, and educational facility in eastern North Carolina with a focus on justice advocacy and leadership development. Franklinton Center is an historic center of transformation where issues affecting the marginalized, the oppressed, and the poor are addressed. A former plantation, Franklinton Center traces its beginnings to the founding of Franklinton Christian College in 1871 and the Congregationalist Bricks School in 1895. A merger of those two schools in the 1950s formed Franklinton Center at Bricks. The Center is related to the UCC.

Our group has the longest partnership as volunteers who upgrade and maintain facilities to help Franklinton Center at Bricks better lead education and programs and meet their community's basic needs.

The work trip costs \$80 per person (includes housing and meals). The trip is subsidized by budgeted funds for mission trips.

Ways to Give to Evangelical Reformed UCC

WEBSITE

www.erucc.org/give



one time or recurring gifts

GIVE THE NEW WAY



*We're moving to a better way of giving.
Scan to try it for yourself!*

CASH OR CHECK

*made payable to
Evangelical Reformed UCC
15 W. Church St,
Frederick MD 21701*



*offering plates
are available in the
rear of the sanctuary
before and after worship*

WINTER GIVING OPPORTUNITIES AT ERUCC!

Giving Tree in Sanctuary Lobby

Looking for ways you or your family can give to those in our community this winter? The ERUCC Giving Tree is a great place to start! The Giving Tree in the Sanctuary Lobby is decorated with ornaments listing needed items for various organizations sponsored by ERUCC's Mission, Evangelism, & Social Justice Committee (MESJ) and Youth Group.

You are invited to take one or more ornaments from the Giving Tree and then bring the donation items to the designated collection box. Read below about the amazing community organizations we are supporting this season and the items that can make a big difference!

SHIP (STUDENT HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE PARTNERSHIP)

Donate November 24 – January 5

Contact: Shelley Weakly, MESJ Chair

SHIP provides critical resources and urgent services to the hundreds of Frederick County youth experiencing homelessness each year. Lend SHIP a helping hand by donating critically needed, NEW, FULL-SIZED hygiene supplies.

BEYOND SHELTER FREDERICK

Donate November 24 – January 5

Contact: Shelley Weakly, MESJ Chair

The mission of Beyond Shelter Frederick (formerly the Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs) is to prevent and alleviate the effects of poverty on the residents of Frederick County. They operate the Alan P. Linton, Jr. Emergency Shelter for adults and an Emergency Family Shelter. Help Beyond Shelter Frederick stock the shelters this winter with donations of items for clients and use in the shelters.

FOSTER FAMILIES – ENTERTAINMENT GIFT CARD PROGRAM

Donate November 24 – December 22

Contact: Pastor Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads or Youth Group members

ERUCC's **Youth Group** has set a goal to collect 32 gift cards for the Frederick County Department of Social Services' Foster Families Program. This program asks for gift cards for locations like MeLand, Warehouse Cinemas, AdventureLand USA, Fourth Dimension Fun Center, Chuck E Cheese, Hot Fired Arts and other similar places. Gift cards are used by families for family visits with birthparents and recreation time as foster families.

Our **Children's Sunday School** classes will also learn about and participate in giving! Look for more details soon from our Pre-K – 2nd grade class, who will be collecting juice boxes for the Frederick Community Fridge and Tide pods for Frederick County Department of Social Services, and our 3rd – 5th grade class, who will collect items to support the Animal Welfare League of Frederick County. These classes will be collecting those donations from December 1 – 22.

YOUR YEAR-END GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

This holiday season, we invite you to reflect on the impact of your generosity. At Evangelical Reformed UCC, your contributions sustain essential ministries, support special programs, and keep our vibrant community thriving. Whether it's nurturing the next generation, providing care to those in need, or creating spaces of hope and inclusion, your gift matters.

Give in a way that's easy and convenient—visit www.erucc.org/give to donate online. Prefer to give by check? Simply make it payable to *Evangelical Reformed UCC* and drop it in the offering plate or mail.

Every gift, no matter the size, is a blessing to our church and the work we do together. Let's make this season one of love, hope, and generosity!

WINTER WEATHER POLICY

Your safety is our top priority. Please use your best judgment to decide if traveling to church is safe. While we would love to see you, we do not want anyone risking their safety to attend. Unless Frederick roads are officially closed, we plan to hold worship services for those who can safely make the journey.

Other in-person activities, including committee meetings and regularly scheduled church events, generally follow the Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) inclement weather plan. If FCPS announces a closure, delayed opening, or early dismissal, the church office will adjust its hours accordingly, and ERUCC activities will be canceled or held virtually when possible and appropriate.

For the latest updates on weather-related closures or cancellations, please check:

- **Church Website:** www.erucc.org
 - **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/eruccfrederick>
-



THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 1

During this period, as we spend time with our families and friends, please note that responses to messages may take longer than usual. However, the office voicemail and email will be checked daily, and we will respond promptly to urgent matters or emergency pastoral care needs. Thank you for your understanding, and we wish you a joyous and peaceful holiday season.

Children, Youth, & Families

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Tuesday, December 17

Meet in the North Room for dinner, then head out to carol

Join us on Tuesday, December 17, for a joyful evening of Christmas caroling that will spread warmth and holiday cheer to our neighbors at Record Street Home! We'll start the night with a light meal in the North Room—a time to gather, enjoy good food, and get ready to sing! Then, we'll head out to share our voices and spread the joy of the season.

This is a great way for children and youth (and adults!) to come together and share the spirit of Christmas with our community. We can't wait to see you there—let's raise our voices and spread some holiday joy!

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children should be checked in by one of their grown-ups at the Check-In Station in the Kieffer Lobby before class.

Pre-K – 2nd Grade

Liz Coffey Room, 9:15 – 10:00 AM

3rd – 5th Grade

Thomas Room, 9:15 – 10:00 AM

CHILDREN'S MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

Liz Coffey Room, 10:00 – 10:20 AM

This music group for children in Pre-K through 5th Grade are invited to participate in rehearsals each Sunday morning following Sunday School from 10:00–10:20 AM in the Liz Coffey Room.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Trinity Chapel, 9:15 – 10:15 AM

Youth Sunday School, with Middle and High School classes, meets in Trinity Chapel, 10 West Church Street. Enter through the side door behind the iron gate on the left side of the building. Always use the crosswalk. Youth will return as a group to the Kieffer Lobby at 10:15 AM.

JUNIOR CHURCH

2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays

dismisses from 10:30 AM worship service

Junior Church is a space to join in creative spiritual formation activities for children ages five through 5th grade. Children begin 10:30 AM worship with their families and are dismissed to Junior Church after the Thought for the Day. On the first Sunday of each month, children participate in worship and communion with their families.

Ministers, Staff, & Lay Leaders of Evangelical Reformed UCC

MINISTERS AND STAFF

Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan ~ *Intentional Interim Senior Pastor* ~ mmorgan@erucc.org

Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads ~ *Associate Pastor for Faith Formation & Parish Life* ~ ksrhoads@erucc.org

Alison E. Shafer ~ *Director of Music*

Tyler L. York ~ *Office Administrator* ~ tyork@erucc.org

Jaci Clayton ~ *Facilities Manager* ~ jclayton@erucc.org

Tricia Coffey ~ *Head Chimer & Children & Youth Choir Director*

Kelly Esslinger ~ *Assistant Director for Bell Choirs & Children's Music*

Jenna Duranko ~ *Social Media Assistant*

Ashley Murphy ~ *Nursery Attendant*

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel ~ *Pastor Emerita*

The Rev. Fred Wenner ~ *Pastor Emeritus*

CONSISTORY

Peter Brehm ~ *President* | Matt Hueting ~ *Vice President*

David Kehne ~ *Secretary* | Robert Morris ~ *Treasurer*

Rebecca Shillingburg ~ *Worship Chair* | Will Duncan ~ *Finance Chair*

Shelley Weakly ~ *Mission, Evangelism, and Social Justice Chair*

Julie Clark ~ *Stewardship/Generosity Chair* | Dan Ebersole ~ *Property Chair*

Vacant ~ *Christian Education Chair* | Matt Davis ~ *Head Deacon* | Larry Martin ~ *Member-at-Large*

ELDERS

Ave Barr | Peter Brehm | Robin Cooney | Matt Hueting | Jeanellen Kallevang | Eric Weakly

DEACONS

Quynn Adkins | Robin A. Brady-Slifer | Robin L. Brady-Slifer | Angela Brittain

Jim Brittain | Matt Davis | Harrison Fisher | Kyle Miller

TRANSITION TEAM

Felecia Bishop | Tommie Bradshaw | Karen Justice | Terry Logee | Allen Maples

Thomasa Pomeroy | Bud Rossig | Eliza Stitely | Katie Zander

Sunday Morning Schedule

subject to change

8:30 – 9:15 AM	Early Worship , Sanctuary
9:00 AM	Coffee and Conversation , Kieffer Lobby
9:00 AM	Let's Study the Bible , North Room
9:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Nursery Care
9:15 – 10:00 AM	Children's Sunday School <i>Pre-K – 2nd Grade</i> , Liz Coffey Room <i>3rd – 5th Grade</i> , Thomas Room
9:15 – 10:15 AM	Youth Sunday School <i>Middle School Youth</i> , Trinity Chapel <i>High School Youth</i> , Trinity Chapel
9:30 AM	Let's Talk , Flora Room
10:00 – 10:20 AM	Children's Music and Movement , Liz Coffey Room
10:30 – 11:30 AM	Worship , Sanctuary and Online at www.erucc.org Junior Church , Thomas Room <i>Participating children are dismissed from Worship (2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays)</i> Young Spirit Rehearsal , Marj Menchey Berkheimer Music Suite <i>Participating Youth are dismissed from Worship (1st and 3rd Sundays)</i>
11:30 AM	Chancel Handbell Choir Rehearsal , Sanctuary <i>Children and Youth</i>

Thursday Rehearsal Schedule

subject to change

6:15 PM	Cambridge Handbell Choir Rehearsal , Sanctuary <i>Contact: Trish Coffey and Kelly Esslinger</i>
7:00 PM	Senior Choir Rehearsal , Marj Menchey Berkheimer Music Suite <i>Contact: Alison E. Shafer</i>

Stay Informed

Subscribe to receive e-news from ERUCC at <http://eepurl.com/gDNCu5> or by scanning the QR code.



Worship services and events at Evangelical Reformed UCC are sometimes photographed and videotaped to document the vibrant life of our church. If you do not wish to be included in these recordings, please notify a deacon or the church office. Always obtain permission prior to sharing images and videos that include minors on your personal social media.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 15, 2024

Luke 3:7-18

Look Forward

There was a cartoon a few years ago making the social media rounds of John the Baptist, arms flailing in anger, pointing to some religious bigwigs. In the picture were also snakes slithering away. The text read, “Happy Advent! You brood of vipers.”

While we might chuckle at first, beneath the brevity is a sobering message. John is calling out the corruption that’s often lurking behind seemingly good deeds.

In John’s case, he is angry with the hypocrisy of the religious elite. They claim to be righteous, but they are just a brood of vipers — snakes slithering away so as not to get consumed by fire. In the agriculture society of the time, people would have been familiar with this image, as snakes would flee for safety when the stubble in fields was burned to prepare for a new planting.

While we might not have witnessed snakes escaping the burning stubble in fields, we have seen — or know of — people who have turned their backs on organized religion because words and actions didn’t match up.

During the holidays, especially, we hear stories of scams claiming to help others when really the money donated lines a pocket that doesn’t need lining. Vipers are out there, but so are obedient sheep.

Take for instance a logger in a rural community who, upon hearing of a severe shortfall in the village’s community fuel fund, took it upon himself to give away wood — his bread and butter — to help others heat their homes. The logger, who didn’t belong to any church, helped many people survive that winter.

Yes, there will always be a brood of vipers in this world, but may we be the ones this Advent season who listen to John, giving away a coat and sharing food with those in need.

Look around your community and begin asking what are the unmet needs? And may you find it in your heart to give like that logger who gave from what little he had himself.

Gracious God, as we draw closer to Christmas, may we realize that we have more than enough and plenty to share with Your children who hunger, thirst and are naked. Release our grips on all that we cling to tightly. Increase our trust that with You, our daily bread will always be sufficient. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



8 1/2" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE