# Living the Promise



# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, below the sanctuary, and on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, outside the Community Room. Single-occupant, all-gender, accessible restrooms are located outside the North and Flora Rooms on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.



# **EVANGELICAL REFORMED United Church of Christ**

# United Church of Christ



An Open and Affirming Congregation –

August 10, 2025

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

10:30 AM

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

#### GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Tyler L. York

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

#### **PRELUDE**

#### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Our faith brings us together this day.

By faith, our ancestors learned to trust in God.

By faith, people have dared to journey into unknown places.

By faith, prophets have spoken God's word.

By faith, God's people gather to worship.

Let us worship God!

## \*OPENING PRAYER

God of eternal promises,

you have been with your people in all times and places.

You have called us, and we have responded.

Open us to your life-giving grace.

Empower us with the faith that supports us when we feel unsure, that dares to challenge things that need to change, and that always reminds us you are never, ever far away. Amen.

# \*OPENING HYMN

Incarnate God, Immortal Love

#414

Stanzas 1, 5, 6

<sup>1</sup> Incarnate God, immortal Love, whom we, that have not seen your face, by faith, and faith alone, embrace, Believing where we cannot prove;

<sup>5</sup> We have but faith; we cannot know, for knowledge is of things proved true; And yet we trust it comes from you, a sign of promise; let it grow.

<sup>6</sup> Let knowledge grow from more to more, but more of reverence in us dwell; That mind and soul, according well, may make one music as before.

#### \*CALL TO CONFESSION

When our worship becomes routine and our hearts drift from God's call to justice and compassion, we are invited to return, not with empty words, but with honest hearts. Let us come before God, seeking mercy and renewal, trusting that grace is always waiting and available to us.

#### \*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Forgive us, God, when our worship is hollow, when our holy days have lost their meaning, when our thoughts are not on your will but are instead on serving our own desires. Forgive us when we ignore your teaching. Forgive us when we think that paying you lip service will make up for all we have done wrong. Call us back. Give us another chance to serve you: to do good, to seek justice, to rescue the oppressed, to plead for those who are silenced. Wash us clean and make us new. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

## \*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Know that God's forgiveness is beyond our perception and understanding but is as real as the air we breathe. God is not ashamed to be called our God.

Thanks be to God.

#### 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 of all ages are invited to participate in the service today. A book nook with children's programs, books, crayons, and activities is in the rear of the sanctuary and a wiggle space is available in the front of the sanctuary near the baptismal font.

#### \*HYMN

Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning

#369

<sup>1</sup>Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, keep your lamps trimmed and burning, keep your lamps trimmed and burning, for this work's almost done.

Refrain: Sisters, don't grow weary,

brothers, don't grow weary, children, don't grow weary, for this work's almost done.

<sup>2</sup> It's our faith makes us happy; it's our faith makes us happy; it's our faith makes us happy, for this work's almost done. [Refrain]

<sup>3</sup> We are climbing Jacob's ladder, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, we are climbing Jacob's ladder, for this work's almost done. [Refrain]

<sup>4</sup> Every round goes higher, higher, every round goes higher, higher, every round goes higher, higher, for this work's almost done. [Refrain]

# THE SCRIPTURES Peg Stahler

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 OT page 518 Luke 12:32-40 NT page 74

Reader: May God bless the reading of this word.

All: Thanks be to God.

**SERMON** 

The Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan

#### **MORNING PRAYERS**

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

We honor the Creator by offering our gifts of service, action, compassion, financial and material resources, and energy to the continuing ministry of the Body of Christ. Let us give generously, trusting God to provide for all needs, individually and collectively.

This is a time during worship 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 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.



#### **OFFERTORY**

Morning Has Broken

ERUCC Summertide Choir – Gaelic Melody, arr. R. Powell

#### \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Generous God, as we bring our gifts, we ask that you receive them and endow us with wisdom and discernment to be good stewards of your abundant blessings.

We ask that you bless all who come to the Community Fridge and Pantry in need. May they receive more than sustenance—may they experience dignity, community, and care.

Multiply these humble offerings, that they may bear fruit in a world longing for justice, flourishing, and joy. Amen.

Forward through the Ages

#377

<sup>1</sup> Forward through the ages, in unbroken line, move the faithful spirits at the call divine; Gifts in differing measure, hearts of one accord, manifold the service, one the sure reward.

Refrain: Forward through the ages, in unbroken line, Move the faithful spirits at the call divine.

Wide grows God's dominion,
reign of love and peace;
for it we must labor, till all strivings cease.
Prophets have proclaimed it, teachers testified,
poets sung its glory, martyrs for it died. [Refrain]

<sup>3</sup> Not alone we conquer, not alone we fall; in each loss or triumph, lose or triumph all. Bound by God's far purpose in one living whole, move we on together to the shining goal. [Refrain]

# \*BENEDICTION

Go in peace to dwell in the presence of God. Know that our Creator and Sustainer is with you always. **Amen.** 

#### \*THREEFOLD AMEN

#812

During the postlude, please remain seated, letting the music flow over you as a closing blessing.

#### **POSTLUDE**



Worship Notes: Liturgy adapted from Seasons of the Spirit and *Dressed for Action:* Service Prayers for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost was written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.

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

The flowers on the altar this morning are placed in loving memory of Isabel Kreh Wilcoxon, Susan Nelson Cramer Kreh, and Lola Ann Dorcus by Susan Kreh.

The yellow rose is presented by Jack Day and Peter Brehm in honor of all our veterans

Attendance Last Sunday: 15 at 8:30 AM, 111 at 10:30 AM, and 29 online.



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

https://sundaystreams.com/go/ERUCC

Serving Today: August 10 Serving Next Week: August 17

Deacons: Robin A. Brady-Slifer Kyle Miller, Tommie Bradshaw

Robin L. Brady-Slifer

Elder: Matt Hueting Eric Weakly
Scripture Reader: Peg Stahler Eric Weakly
Acolyte: JD Bowman Vivian Bowman

Greeters: Cathie Duncan, Felecia Bishop Tom Ford, Rachel Ford

Julie Ebersole Felecia Bishop

Welcome Table: Jeanellen Kallevang, Thi Nguyen Jeanellen Kallevang

Audio/Visual: Ethan Kline, Larry Martin Kelly Esslinger, Jeff Schaeberle

Kelly Esslinger Jack Day

Nursery: Kate Fromknecht

Fellowship: Ave Barr, Cliff Barr, Pat Condo Karen Justice, Marj Berkheimer

Joan Maples, Allen Maples

Jen Powell, Bud Rossig

Peter Brehm, Felecia Bishop

Rob McGuire, Alex Martinez

# Next Sunday: August 17 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrews 11:29—12:2 | Luke 12:49-56

The readings today invite reflection on the sources of strength and encouragement that God provides to restore and guide as we take up our role as disciples. There are both joys and trials in choosing a life of faithfulness, and we give thanks for the great cloud of people of faith who journey with us in God's realm.

The ERUCC Summertide Choir will sing.

#### **PRAYER LIST**

We invite you to hold the following people in your prayers this week. Though we may not know the specifics of their needs, God does, and our prayers are a meaningful way to surround them with love and support.

ERUCC seeks permission before adding a name to this list or in worship announcements. There are many for whom we pray and visit whose names are not listed in the bulletin by their request.

Karen Stitely

Beth Pinner (niece of Bob Pinner)

Donna Baumgardner Smith (friend of Sandra Trout)

Amber Khan (friend of Maria and Dawn Lagrotteria)

Bill Cassell (brother of Ave Barr)

Hayden Jessop (friend of Sophia Carliss)

The Murray/Lennox/Cable Family

Rhea Stein

John Howard (brother of

David Howard)
Doris Esslinger

Sandra Trout

Sandra Trout

Charlie Van Eman (son of friends of Kathleen and Niel Jefferson)

Kathy Johnson

Mary Staley

Mike Robertson (friend of Kathleen and Niel Jefferson)

Pat Condo

Wells Condo

Kitty Bradley

Beanie Cornell

Milt Crutchley

Raymond Slifer (father of Robin A. Brady-Slifer)

Susan Bonhag (friend of the

Mercier family)

Tom Frazier

Pauline Marendt

Kayla Merry (niece of Kim

Sexton)

Carol Spera (mother of Mark

Ulrich)

Emogene Wyand

**Bob Pinner** 

Tanya Pearre (sister of Colleen

Baldree)

Jim Baldree (father of Chuck

Baldree)

Anne Gallagher (friend of Milt and Bettie Joe Crutchley)

Lee Thomas

Marcia Eisenstein

Derek C. Hupp (grandson of

Beanie & Gaylon Cornell)
Wayne Kolb (friend of Ste

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)

Cards invited: Emogene Wyand

701 Wyngate Dr Frederick, MD 21701

# PASTORAL CARE

ERUCC 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 the 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.

# **Activities, Events, and Announcements**

#### HELP PACK THE PANTRY

Sunday, August 10, during both worship services

Let's continue to BE the Church by supporting our neighbors in need. Once a month, we work together to fill the Frederick Community Fridge pantry in our church parking lot.

#### **Summer Months: Peanut Butter Jelly Mission**

You are invited to bring any of the following shelf-stable, unopened, and unexpired items to worship to ensure there is food available for children while school is out. You can place them on the table at the chancel as you arrive. We will offer a prayer of dedication over the items before sending them out to bless our neighbors:

- Peanut/nut butters
- Boxed mac & cheese
- Shelf-stable milk
- Juice boxes or bottles
- Cereal

- Ravioli/Spaghetti-Os
- Cans of soup
- Applesauce
- Canned proteins (tuna, chicken, etc.)
- Treats like fruit rollups, Little Debbie's, goldfish, Oreos, etc.

If you're unable to bring donations on August 10, you can place them in the pantry at any time.

**Contact:** Kim Sexton, mkcssexton@comcast.net.

#### **BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS**

Sunday, August 17, during 10:30 AM Worship

The first day of school is just around the corner, and we want to send you into the new year with love, laughter, and a whole lot of blessings! Join us on Sunday, August 17, for our annual Blessing of the Backpacks, a joyful celebration for students, teachers, and school staff of all ages and stages. Whether you're heading into preschool or grad school, teaching your first class or your thirtieth, or supporting students behind the scenes, you are welcome!

Bring your backpack, tote bag, laptop case, or briefcase to worship as we bless the journey ahead and remind one another: you are not alone, your church family is cheering you on every step of the way!

BE A BLESSING PRACTICE PEACE.

BE JOYFUL. PRAY OFTEN. BE KIRD. GIVE THANKS.

DO 600D. HAVE COURAGE. WORK FOR JUSTICE.

BE THE 116HT. ENCOURAGE OTHERS. QUITERSHURCH

#### **ERUCC WORK & PREP DAY**

Saturday, September 6

Save the date! Join us at ERUCC's Work & Prep Day, a time to roll up our sleeves and care for our shared spaces together. Whether you love to paint, sort, clean, or just lend a helping hand, there will be something for everyone; no special skills or age required! More details coming soon.

#### WEEKLY PRAYER GATHERING

Wednesdays

Sanctuary, 4:30 PM

When the world outside is disintegrating, there is a place of respite. Look how Jesus approached it with his disciples: "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest awhile".

On Wednesday afternoons, you are invited to enter the church (the far left front door into the Kieffer Lobby and the elevator vestibule door will be unlocked at 4:15 PM) and proceed quietly to the front of the sanctuary. We will meet promptly at 4:30 PM, have a few moments of "wisdom," perhaps chant together, and then fall into 20 minutes of silence (centering prayer/meditation). We will dismiss in silence at 5:00 PM. Led by Rev. Richard Leslie.

#### WELCOMING SPACES – HELP NEEDED

Sunday, August 17

Our friends from Curious Iguana are returning to the Community Room for an author talk and book signing (paid tickets required) on Sunday afternoon, August 17. *New York Times* bestselling author Lisa Gardner will be discussing her latest thriller, *Kiss Her Goodbye*, with a representative from the non-profit No One Left Behind, with whom she partnered to research the novel. No One Left Behind is dedicated to evacuating, resettling, and advocating for our wartime allies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and beyond who have been displaced from their homes due to their support for the U.S. mission. Learn more at https://curiousiguana.com/event/lisa-gardner/.

# How you can help:

- Assist with room setup immediately after worship on Sunday, August 17 all tables need to be stored, the stage setup, and ~300 chairs need to be placed in rows!
- Volunteer as a Hospitality Host from 2:00 3:15 PM to greet and guide guests in the Kieffer Lobby. Contact the Church Office at <a href="mailto:erucc@erucc.org">erucc@erucc.org</a> or (301) 662-2762 to help.

#### GET EXCITED ABOUT OUR FALL GERMAN PARTNERSHIP

Prepare to support our **West Germany Youth Partnership**, who will be with us October 11-19 (Saturday night through Sunday worship, leaving for the airport Sunday after church).

- Contact Suzanne Morris (Morrissuzyq@aol.com) if you are able to serve as a host family.
- Contact Julie Clark (jclarkad@yahoo.com) and Renae Kline (rdkline15@gmail.com) if you are able to help with serving group meals.
- Contact Pastor Kirstin (<u>ksrhoads@erucc.org</u>) if you can help with airport travel on Sundays or area travel during the week.

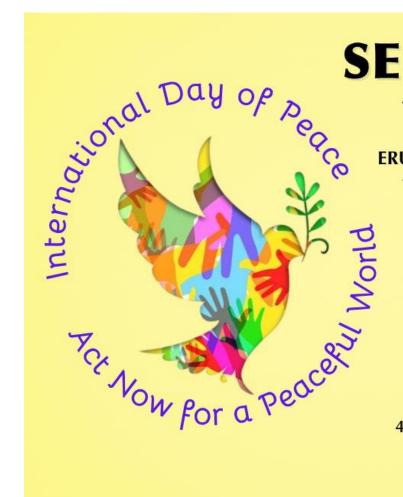
#### **GENTLE YOGA RETURNS!**

Tuesdays, starting September 9 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, <a href="mailto:rdkline15@gmail.com">rdkline15@gmail.com</a>.

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.



SEPTEMBER 21 1:30-8:00 PM

15 W Church St. and Baker Park Frederick, MD

#### Events Include

1:30-3 PM ~ Film Showing: "There is Another Way"

3-4 PM ~ Workshops: Braver Angels & Others Rotary Club Peace Efforts

4-6 PM ~ Group Walk to Baker Park

Sing-A-Long & Music

Art Projects: Making Peace Signs Origami: Folding Cranes Tattoos & Face Painting

6-7 PM ~ Return to the Community Room
Potluck Supper

Sponsored by Frederick Friends Meeting & Others

#### ADVOCACY IN ACTION

#### Tell Congress to Stop Supporting Human Rights Violations in the Philippines!



For the past several years, the Philippines has been deemed one of the deadliest countries in the world for human rights defenders, journalists, and trade unionists. Under former

President Duterte's regime, massacres, killings, and intimidation became a regular occurrence, with the number of extrajudicial killings estimated at 30,000.

In July, General Synod 35 resoundingly passed the Declaration of Support for Philippine Human Rights (read more at <a href="https://bit.ly/40HlAi4">https://bit.ly/40HlAi4</a>). Join the UCC in living out this declaration of faith by taking action to support our siblings in the Philippines!

Take Action here: bit.ly/JPAN128771

#### DISASTER RECOVERY TRIP - TIOGA COUNTY, PENN.

October 5 - 10, 2025



ERUCC's Mission, Evangelism, & Social Justice Committee encourages anyone interested to participate in an upcoming long-term recovery disaster relief work trip to Tioga County, Pennsylvania, this fall!

Tioga County was particularly hard hit by flooding triggered by the remnants of Tropical Storm Debby in August 2024. Some of those affected areas were also drenched by the leftovers of Tropical Storm Fred in August 2021 and took months to recover.

Our partner for our work week is Develop Tioga, a local organization that has formed a Long-Term Recovery Team continuing to work with those affected. The recovery work has been focused on cleaning up debris from properties and repairing homes that were devastated by flooding. Previous groups have been doing work such as installing water heaters, drywall, replacing insulation, and building ramps.

As we get closer to the time of the trip and know the skills of the group members, we will be able to have a clearer idea of what our group will be doing. We will need people with a variety of skills, as well as people who are willing to learn new skills, cook, and do material runs for the group. In other words, we will find meaningful work for you to do.

**Group Size:** Up to 20

**Cost:** Approximately \$100 per person for food. As of right now, the group will be cooking at a local church. One dinner out at your own expense.

Accommodations: Penn York Camp. Participants will need to bring sleeping bags or bedding.

**Schedule:** Participants arrive late afternoon/early evening on October 5. We can arrange for the carpooling once we know who is going.

- Monday Friday, October 6-10: Work Projects
- Departure: Early afternoon on Friday, October 10th

Contact: Barbara Kershner Daniel, CAC Disaster Response Coordinator at bkdaniel@cacucc.org.

# **Children & Youth Activities, Events, and Announcements**

#### SUMMER SUNDAYS FOR KIDS & YOUTH: "I AM" SERIES

Select Sundays

dismisses from 10:30 AM worship service

This summer, we're embracing a more relaxed rhythm with five special Sundays designed just for children and youth—from Pre-K through high school. These gatherings offer a meaningful balance: space for spiritual growth and connection, while also honoring the value of rest, travel, and time away for our wonderful volunteers and families.

Each session will focus on a unique "I AM" theme, exploring identity, faith, and authenticity through story, discussion, and activity.

We hope your child will join us for our final affirming, fun, and thoughtful gathering:

August 24 - "I am We: A Book of Community" led by Pastor Kirstin

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

begins Sunday, September 8

We're excited to welcome all children and youth back for a new year of Sunday School on Sunday, September 7! Join us for a joyful morning of learning, connection, and faith formation as we begin a brand new year together.

Classes for all ages begin at 9:15 AM. Bring your curiosity, your questions, and a friend!

More details coming soon, but for now, mark your calendars!

# A JUST WORLD FOR ALL.



# 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 ~ Executive Church Administrator ~ tyork@erucc.org

Jaci Clayton ~ Facilities Manager ~ jclayton@erucc.org

Ann Watkins ~ Administrative Assistant/Receptionist ~ awatkins@erucc.org

Ashley Murphy ~ Nursery Attendant

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel ~ *Pastor Emerita*The Rev. Fred Wenner ~ *Pastor Emeritus* 

#### **CONSISTORY**

Peter Brehm ~ Acting President | Matt Hueting ~ Vice President

David Kehne ~ Secretary | Robert Morris ~ Treasurer

Rebecca Shillingburg ~ Worship Chair | Peter Brehm ~ Finance Chair

Shelley Weakly ~ Mission, Evangelism, and Social Justice Chair | Vacant ~ Property Chair

Julie Clark ~ Stewardship/Generosity Chair | Holly Davis ~ Christian Education Chair

Mark Ulrich ~ Head Deacon | Larry Martin ~ Member-at-Large

#### **ELDERS**

Ave Barr | Peter Brehm | Matt Hueting | Jeanellen Kallevang | Susan Kulp | Eric Weakly

#### **DEACONS**

Quynn Adkins | Tommie Bradshaw | Robin A. Brady-Slifer | Robin L. Brady-Slifer Angela Brittain | Jim Brittain | Kyle Miller | Mark Ulrich

#### SETTLED PASTOR SEARCH AND CALL COMMITTEE

Rachael Bowman | Tommie Bradshaw | Karl Cooper | Linda Coyle | Matt Hueting

Terry Logee | Jen Powell | Bud Rossig | Eliza Stitely

# **Sunday Morning Schedule**

subject to change

8:30 – 9:15 AM Early Worship, Sanctuary

9:00 AM Coffee and Conversation, Kieffer Lobby

9:15 AM – 12:00 PM **Nursery Care** 

10:30 – 11:30 AM Worship, Sanctuary and Online at www.erucc.org

11:30 AM Fellowship, Downtown Community Room

# **Stay Informed**



Subscribe to receive e-news from ERUCC at <a href="http://eepurl.com/gDNCu5">http://eepurl.com/gDNCu5</a> 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.

#### NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 10, 2025

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

# Living into the Promise

There was a woman in my rural congregation who every year would win a handful of blue ribbons for the flower arrangements entered at the county fair. I was told that every flower used came from her garden, which everyone described as "magical." I had to see this for myself.

One day I stopped by and there she was watering lush pink peonies. I was in awe by the beauty all around and admitted to her that nothing ever grew for me. I even confessed my lack of faith, doubting that a seed would grow each time I covered it with dirt.

She looked at me with shocked eyes, scolding me that my lack of faith was the very thing preventing me from a beautiful garden.

"Remember, pastor, faith is in things hoped for and in things unseen," she said, citing scripture from Hebrews.

As she filled her rusty watering can from the just as rusty hand pump, she shared with me her secret to gardening.

"I put every seed, sapling and bulb into the ground, trusting that the beauty I cannot see will burst forth," she said.

Could it be that faith was all I needed to turn my pitiful flowerbeds into a scene worthy of Monet to paint.

When this master gardener quoted Hebrews to me, I was reminded of all God's children who "by faith" stepped forward to do things that seemed impossible. By faith, Noah built an ark. By faith, Abraham left his home for a new one. By faith, Sarah, his wife, bore a son even though her childbearing days were far behind her. By faith is how they lived, trusting God with a beautiful future even when that future could not be seen.

Today, that magical garden is gone, as are all the artistic flower arrangements that came from it. The hands of the one who planted each seed "by faith" is now tending to heavenly gardens. As for me, I am trying my best to have faith in the seeds I now plant.

For without faith, where would all the great gardens be? Without faith, where would all the great testimonies of ordinary people doing extraordinary things be?

And who knows? Maybe someday the roll call of faith will read, "By faith, a pastor finally grew a beautiful flower."

God of beauty and grace, help us live more "by faith" this day, holding on always to hope and trusting in all things unseen. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)

