

Trinity Chimes

SUMMER/FALL 2025

Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ, Frederick, Maryland



A New Chapter Begins: Rejoice in Our Welcome!

Rejoice in Our Welcome Sunday, celebrated at ERUCC on September 7, marks a special milestone as we turn the page into a new chapter filled with promise and possibility. This day celebrates the beginning of our fall programming, as well as the incredible story that has unfolded to bring us to this moment of renewed connection and shared purpose.

What a remarkable journey we have shared! Our hearts were prepared during the reflective season of Lent, lifted high through the joy of Eastertide, and ignited by the Spirit during Pentecost. The celebrations that followed have strengthened our bonds as a community of faith, including Youth Sunday, where our young leaders shared their gifts, and Pride Sunday, which reminded us of God's inclusive love that embraces all people.

This summer has been filled with extraordinary opportunities for growth and service that you can read about throughout

the pages of this newsletter. Our youth experienced great adventures, from a journey to Germany to the joy-filled week at Camp Gretna Glen. Children discovered God's love during Vacation Bible School, while our entire community lived out our calling through mission opportunities and service projects supporting our neighbors.

As we write the next pages of our shared story, we are blessed to witness another significant milestone: our Settled Pastor Search Committee is putting the final touches on our Church Profile to be submitted in September to the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ. This important step begins the process of accepting pastor profiles for consideration, marking another chapter in our ongoing journey together.

Rejoice in Our Welcome Sunday launches our new year of faith formation programming. Classes for all ages,

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Living in the Sacred “In Between”

This spring, our ERUCC community embarked on a profound spiritual journey, moving through Palm Sunday’s “messy middle,” Easter’s resurrection joy, Pentecost’s transforming fire, and Pride Sunday’s radical affirmation of belovedness. Each worship experience invited us deeper into God’s story and challenged us to grow in holiness as we live out our faith.

Palm Sunday: Finding God in the Messy Middle

On Palm Sunday, we entered Holy Week acknowledging that Jesus “marched in between the city walls and the Temple, in between joyful Hosannas and doubtful whispers.” Our liturgy reminded us that most of life happens in these liminal spaces, between what has been and what could be. As we blessed palms and sang “Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna in between!” we learned to trust that God meets us exactly where we are, in all our complexity and contradiction.



Easter: Running Toward Hope

Easter morning dawned with brass music, children’s laughter, and tiny Jesus figurines hidden in eggs throughout the sanctuary. Our call to worship proclaimed, “Today we know that death does not have the last word... that nothing can separate us from the love of God.” Like Peter running to the empty tomb, we were invited to run toward hope even when it feels fragile. The women at the tomb came mourning and still received the good news first, reminding us that grief and joy can coexist in the resurrection life. Our communion celebration affirmed that this Table welcomes us with our questions, hopes, and “everything in between.”

Growing in Holiness Together

Throughout these holy days, ERUCC has grown in holiness by embracing paradox, celebrating diversity, and practicing radical welcome. We've remembered God's story as one of persistent love that meets us in our complexity, transforms us through community, and empowers us to love boldly in the world. As we continue living out our faith, we carry forward the peace of Palm Sunday's "in between," Easter's joy that encompasses grief, Pentecost's unifying fire, and Pride Sunday's affirmation that all are beloved. This sacred journey reminds us that growing in holiness isn't about perfection; it's about showing up authentically in the messy middle, running toward hope, opening ourselves to transformation, and celebrating the beautiful diversity of God's creation. As our Holy Week benediction proclaimed: "You do not go alone. God is with you in the mountains, in the valleys, and everywhere in between."

Pentecost: Becoming Fire-Filled People

On Pentecost Sunday, our children led us into worship dancing with ribbon flames of red, orange, and yellow, embodying the Spirit's movement among us. We celebrated not just the Church's birthday, but God's ongoing work "to bring together people of all tongues, nations, races, genders, sexualities, abilities, and economic circumstances." The reading of Acts 2 in multiple languages created a beautiful cacophony, reminding us that the Spirit speaks to all people in their own understanding. We left equipped to be "Pentecost people," moved by the Spirit, called into community, and sent out with courage for the work of love.

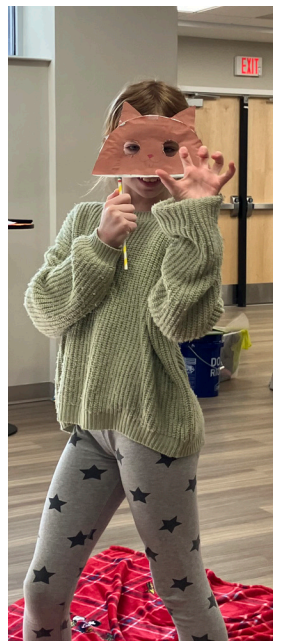
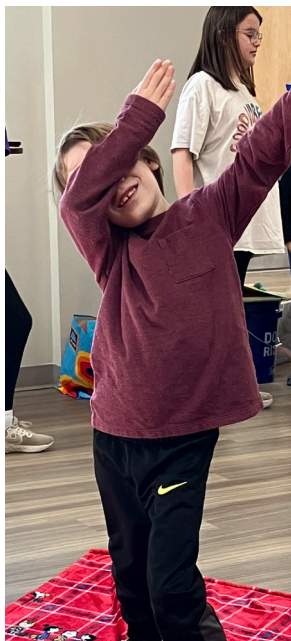
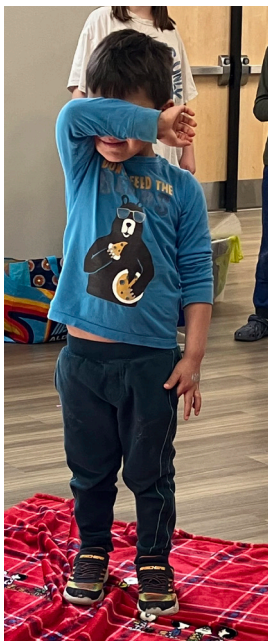


Pride Sunday: Celebrating Sacred Worth

Our Pride Sunday worship boldly proclaimed that we are made in God's image and called beloved, not despite our identities, but because of the full spectrum of who God created us to be. We courageously acknowledged times when we've caused others to doubt God's love and committed ourselves to using our privilege to uplift marginalized voices. The service affirmed that "Pride is not just a season, it's a sacred reminder" that every person reflects the imago Dei. We celebrated the unique gifts, personalities, and identities that shine brightly within our faith community.

God's Kids Club: A Theatrical Day!

On February 17, our God's Kids Club gathered around the theme of Theatre. A couple of our youth who are active in theatre led games and warm-ups, which quickly became a favorite part of the day! Together, we explored God as the author, creator, designer, and planner of all creation. After reading passages connected to each role, kids colored scenery and then worked in small groups to design their own "sets."



We also crafted masks, took a stroll down our very own red carpet, and capped off the day with a chocolate fountain reception while watching "The Emperor's New Groove." A big thank you to Kim Sexton for joining us—and for lending us her fountain to make the day even sweeter!



**SAVE THE DATES FOR
GOD'S KIDS' CLUB
THIS FALL**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2 &
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

Pack the Pantry: Love in Action

Summer Love in Action

This summer, ERUCC answered the call to support families facing food insecurity when children are home from school and meal needs increase.

Once a month, our generous congregation filled the pantry of the **Frederick Community Fridge** with kid-friendly snacks, easy meals, and pantry staples. As we prayed each collection Sunday: *"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."*

What a fabulous response we have had to packing the pantry! It has brought tears to our eyes to see how our church family loves our neighbors in such tangible ways. This is doing God's work and giving our prayers footprints.

Upcoming Pack the Pantry Dates

September 14 - Pasta Power.

National Linguine Day is September 15, so let's celebrate by packing the pantry with all things pasta! Bring any shape pasta and your favorite shelf-

stable sauce to fill our community pantry with comfort food classics.

October 12 - Fall Comfort Foods.

There's a chill in the air as fall arrives! Bring soup, chili, stews, crackers, and muffin or biscuit mixes to warm hearts and homes. Cans with pull-tops are especially welcome for easy preparation.

November 9 - Thanksgiving in

a Bag for Two. Create a complete Thanksgiving meal in a gallon Ziploc bag: box of instant stuffing, bag of instant mashed potatoes, can of green beans (or vegetable of choice), 2 cans of chicken, chicken gravy packet, and can of cranberry sauce.

Feel free to add a dessert treat! Most ingredients can be found at Dollar Tree.

December 14 - Holiday Family Traditions. What special food does your family always enjoy during the holidays? If the ingredients are shelf-stable, share that tradition! Whether it's crackers with cheese and meat, canned seafood for appetizers, or another family favorite... use your imagination to spread holiday joy.

Please remember: all items must be non-perishable and not expired.



Congregational Life: Baptisms



Camryn Huenger, March 30, 2025



The Black family celebrates Hudson and Julianne's Baptisms



Hudson Black, August 24, 2025



Julianne Black, August 24, 2025

Congregational Life: New Members



Karl & Jen Cooper



Paul McGinley



Rev. Fred Rhines

Celebrating Our Graduates

We were filled with joy as we celebrated on May 25 the accomplishments of ERUCC community members who graduated!

We gave thanks for the accomplishments of our high school graduates:

Sophia Carliss, Nathan Chappell, Kit Tonon, Carmen Conlon, and Sasha Hoffman;

Our college graduates: Colleen Hueting and Aiden Baldree;

Those who completed graduate theological degrees: Jenna Duranko and Tommie Bradshaw, both receiving a Master of Arts, and Rebecca Shillingburg, receiving a Doctor of Ministry.

And Jacqueline Messner who completed her postgraduate degree, receiving a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

Congrats!



Pastor Kirstin (center) celebrates with Rev. Dr. Rebecca Shillingburg (left) and Rev. Jenna Duranko

2025 Academic Scholarships Awarded

Evangelical Reformed UCC is fortunate to have scholarship programs available to our post-secondary students as they seek educational opportunities to develop knowledge and skills.

Robert McCardell established the McCardell Scholarship Fund in honor and memory of his family. The Kieffer Scholarship Fund was established in honor of Dr. Henri L. Kieffer, pastor of this church from 1910 to 1946. The Liz Coffey Scholarship Fund was established in memory and in honor of our beloved, Liz Coffey. Contributions to these Scholarship Funds by members and friends of the church are always welcome.

The Scholarship Committee awarded gifts to church members for post-secondary undergraduate education based on the quality of the candidate's plan for the use of the funds, the applicant's ability and promise, the need for financial assistance, and active participation in the life of the church.

Our committee was very impressed with the academic accomplishments of all of this year's recipients. They shared their involvement in many worthwhile extracurricular programs during the phone interviews with committee members.

For the 2025 academic year, the following members were recipients of scholarships:

Lucy Adkins	Senior	St. Mary's College of Maryland
Alex Cumber	Senior	St. Mary's College of Maryland
Erin Gohegan	Senior	Wilson College
Trevor Weakly	Senior	Gettysburg College
Luke Chappell	Junior	University of Maryland, Baltimore
Paige Coffey	Junior	Purdue University Global
Liam Cumber	Sophomore	Salisbury State University
Jared Hueting	Sophomore	West Virginia University
Sophia Carliss	Freshman	Connecticut College
Nathan Chappell	Freshman	Frederick Community College

Scholarship Committee

Sandra Trout, Chair, Tricia Coffey, Cathie Duncan, and Dan Smith

PRIDE!

ERUCC Celebrates Pride - Near and Far

What a joy to be part of Frederick's first-ever Pride Parade on June 27! We also joined the Frederick Pride Festival on June 28 with a booth to share God's affirming love and information about our church, and we were honored to take part ecumenically in the Interfaith Pride Worship Service. A multi-generational group also traveled to Washington, DC on June 8 to participate in WorldPride, reminding us that our local witness is part of a global movement for justice and joy. From Frederick's streets to the nation's capital, ERUCC continues to share God's wide welcome with all.







Turning Together: Creating Spaces of Welcome One Conversation at a Time

Kevin Coyle

What makes you feel welcomed, accepted, and loved for who you are? This question has been on my mind since sharing my thoughts as part of the **Let's Talk** session that centered around welcoming those who are disabled into the life of the church. I will never forget when church member Allen Maples sat down and conversed with me when I first joined this church. That simple gesture helped me feel welcome. I do not take such gestures for granted. Before I found this church, I tried a church where no one greeted me after the service leaving me feeling unwelcome.

Interestingly, the Latin roots for the word "conversation" when taken into account mean "to turn together." To truly have a conversation we turn towards one another, face to face. However, we so often avoid certain encounters altogether. We may think we know about a group of people, buying into a stereotype which is often reinforced in the communities that we inhabit. This we may do without ever encountering or meeting with the perceived "other." Collective isolation can prevent us from growing in mind and heart. Venturing beyond the borders of our community takes

great courage, but for the person who stands across it may make all the difference.

Perhaps the greatest practitioner of this ethic was Jesus himself. In reaching out to sinners, outcasts, and the rejected, he ventured into places where others did not dare tread. He sat at dinner tables and rejoiced in fellowship, forging friendship bonds. We don't know all the conversations he had with people, but I suspect that for those he met and sat by, he may have been the first person who truly listened in empathy. He looked past appearances to see into the heart. Whereas others rejected, ignored, and dismissed certain people, Jesus dared to be love.

Seeing as God sees is no easy feat. Just as we are often blind to our own faults, we are often blind to the gifts others carry. Yet, one thing that can help is finding some commonality. In time, I began to realize that we are more than an ideological label. We have passions, interests, and dreams in life. In this church I found people who share an interest in art. Sharing our latest works or photos of nature has become our enjoyable Sunday

ritual. Through conversations we share our gifts with one another.

From experience, I know that there are few things more healing than having a conversation with someone who has been through similar experiences. They let us know that we are not alone. Such companions are the people we can turn to in our most trying days. In my journey as someone with a mental illness, peer support has been invaluable. And now I am at a place where I can offer peer support to others.

As I reflect on how to close this meditation, I am reminded of a song: *"Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord."* It is a song church member Richard Leslie invited attendees to sing as a closing to one of his Sunday School classes. As a congregation, we will never be perfect in our holy quest to welcome people into the life of the church, but we can pray that God opens the eyes of our hearts. The Sunday School class we had on welcoming those with disabilities is not an end, but only a beginning. In days to come, we can continue to turn to one another to warmly converse, seeking to be a church that can say, *"Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."*

Soup For You

This Spring, our youth decided to get creative with their fundraisers to help meet their budget goals. The result? A brand-new addition to the menu—soups!

We're especially grateful to Julie Clark for organizing the effort and to the families who cooked together to make it happen. Some of the surprise offerings included loaded baked potato, gluten-free vegan pumpkin, and split pea with ham. The crowd favorite may have been the turkey, kale, and white bean soup, though you can never go wrong with a trusty chicken noodle.

As Miguel, one of our youth, reminded us, soup often brings up comforting memories. For him, it was the chicken noodle his mom makes whenever he's sick.

Thanks to all who donated and supported this effort: we raised just over \$400 toward youth trips!



Valentine's Day Joy from Our Youth

Recipients of the Valentine's gifts created by ERUCC youth were delighted by the thoughtful surprises. Smiles, gratitude, and kind words flowed: "How sweet!" "This is very pretty!" "Oh, please tell them thank you!"

One recipient shared, "Just today I received the lovely Valentine treat created by the youth group. Jeanellen, faithful friend, stopped by with it and we had a delightful visit. Such an uplift for me. Please express my grateful thanks to the youth group."

Another wrote, "I had a wonderful surprise visit from Jeanellen. She brought a tall glass decorated with a red heart and filled with chocolate candy. I want to thank you for all you do with the youth!"

Our youth's creativity and care made Valentine's Day brighter for many in our community.



Reflections About Franklinton Center at Bricks

Serving at Franklinton Center is very important to me so I can share this project with my elementary students. When I first started teaching in 1996, the school system that I worked for talked about celebrating Black History Month but there was nothing in the curriculum. In the beginning, I used to teach my first graders about Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman. I worried about who might overhear the questions from my young students and I always worried that I would get parent complaints. I did occasionally get them. Their kids would come home and ask honest questions that make some adults uncomfortable with their own views of the world.

I was raised in a racist house where terrible words were used to refer to anyone that was different by my parents' standards. Fortunately, I had an exceptional teacher that posed questions to me as a young child that helped me make up my own mind about what was right, and I began a rather long process of rebellion with my parents. As a teacher, I hoped to have a positive influence on kids like me that were being taught to hate at home.

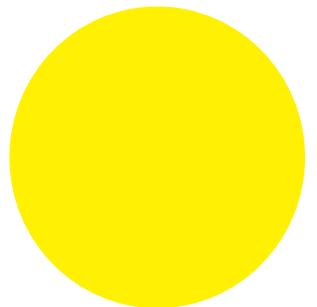
Thankfully, I now work in a school system that encourages us to teach these valuable stories about justice to our students. We have a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion and last year, for the first time in my teaching career, there are black leaders and musicians included in our regular curriculum, apart from Black History Month.

This year, when I said that the fight for justice wasn't over, I had students that were shocked that injustice still happens. And boy, did that spark some questions and an important discussion! It means so much to me that my students, especially those of color, see me supporting a community like the one at FCAB that fights for justice. It is with great pride that I tell them about my Franklinton experience and why I feel that serving is important. And yes, I still got a parent email asking if this was necessary. Yes. I truly believe it is.

—Kelly Hueting

Franklinton is special to me, as it shows how a few kind acts can improve the lives of others. Franklinton is a monument to good people, who have faced many challenges, and despite this, they persevere for themselves and their community. It is place to learn valuable skills and forge deep connections which will last for years. The Franklinton center trip is an invaluable experience, one which benefits all who attend. It is not just a service trip but a journey of discovery and learning.

—Max, High School Youth



Franklinton is important to me because it is really nice to know I am influencing people's lives for the better and very rewarding to see all that we can accomplish as a community working together. I have learned new skills like how to replace ceiling panels, paint trim, and how fun it can be to demolish a broken ramp and rebuild a new one in its place. Being at Franklinton also lets you meet new people and build stronger friendships. You will definitely leave Franklinton with a couple of inside jokes. At the end of the weekend, I like seeing all that we have done and getting to directly see the people and community that our work impacts.

—Katie, High School Youth

When we read the quotes, a particular quote caught my eye, which mentioned how people are racist and discriminatory to each other simply to make themselves feel better and more worthy. By realizing that the cause of all inequality is selfishness, putting down one another to raise yourself higher, that made me connect that there is still injustice in the world because people say mean comments or are rude and though most people would think that's not racism, it has the same root of feeling better about yourself at another's cost.

Meanwhile, we can work to end this discrimination by taking the high road and choosing to help and include others, no matter who they are, and by doing that we can help fulfill

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Junior's dream.

—Laurel, Middle School Youth

While we were at Franklinton, we had the opportunity to look at several different quotes and find one that we connected with. The one I found is a Martin Luther King Jr quote on leadership. It says,

"May I stress the need for courageous, intelligent, and dedicated leadership... Leaders of sound integrity. Leaders not in love with publicity, but in love with justice. Leaders not in love with money, but in love with humanity. Leaders who can subject their particular egos to the greatness of the cause."

This was meaningful to me at Franklinton because it outlines the qualities of a good leader and how a good leader can unite and include people just as the Franklinton trip helped unite us with the people there and helped unite our church and especially our youth group together as a whole.

Franklinton also made this quote more meaningful to me in life because one of the things I enjoy most at Franklinton besides helping people is playing football. And while I enjoy mixing up the white and gray paint (again), and I am certain that there are no werewolves in those woods, I love playing football because it is my dream to one day be a football coach, and this quote and being at Franklinton where I am surrounded by great people has shown me that great coaches are first and foremost great leaders. Similarly, football has shown me that great coaches and leaders coach and lead by example and do not ask anyone to do something that they would not do themselves.

—Lucas, High School Youth

Thank you, Trish & Kelly

On June 1, our ERUCC family gathered during worship and fellowship to celebrate and honor two beloved staff members whose musical gifts have enriched our worship and nurtured our children's faith journeys transitioning out of staff roles, Trish Coffey, our Head Chimer and Director of Children & Youth Choirs, and Kelly Esslinger, our Assistant Director for Bell Choirs and Children's Music, were surprised with a beautiful musical tribute featuring the very choirs and ensembles they have lovingly led. The surprise anthem from the children Young Spirit choir's heartfelt music, and the harmonious ringing of both the Cambridge and Chancel Handbell Choirs filled our sanctuary with gratitude for their years of dedicated service. Their legacy of nurturing young voices and creating sacred music will continue to resonate in our hearts and in our worship for years to come.



Keeping the Faith

Rev. David S. Cooney, Ph.D.

Early in the year, I sent Dr. Morgan a piece that I had sent to friends and colleagues across the country, detailing my concerns about the then incoming administration and the support of Christian Nationalists. In the piece, I compared the rise of the Third Reich in Germany in the 1930s to the strategies and actions of the Trump administration. The parallels are striking and frightening. Dr. Morgan asked if I would be willing to share my writing with the congregation. I demurred, because so much had happened so quickly that the piece already felt out of date. I promised to write an updated piece after returning from traveling. This is the promised writing.

In the first piece, I detailed the actions of not just Hitler, but essentially the playbook used by every strongman in the last few centuries who turned the government into a dictatorship. In each case, with slight variations depending on the starting point, this has included centralizing authority, as opposed to a system of checks and balances; hamstringing any legislative body, be it a congress or parliament or other law making body; demonizing the press and using only government approved news outlets to control the narrative; punishing political enemies; blaming a minority group or groups for economic and social problems; and staffing the courts, justice departments, military, and law enforcement agencies with

those loyal to the dictator instead of the country. Indeed, being sure that only loyalists are in positions of authority and enforcement, with all others being purged, is a basic tenant of dictatorships. It is easy to see each of these steps being taken in this country today.

It is a concern, and much has been written about this over the last weeks. I do not have anything new to add and you do not need to hear it from me. More apropos to our setting at ERUCC is another concern, or maybe hurt is a better word. That is the rabid support of the power grabbing, greed, and disregard for human dignity and need we are experiencing by Christian Nationalists and Evangelical Christians. (These represent two different groups but, in a Venn diagram, there is overlap).

I understand and accept that there are differences within the Christian community. There are reasons there are so many denominations, over 33,000 in fact. Most differences relate to culture, geography, language, ethnicity, worship style and the like. Sometimes it is even because of theology – imagine that. Still, there are some fundamentals that should be core to any who claim the title Christian.

I begin with this. When Jesus was asked which commandment was the most important, he gave the common answer: you shall love the Lord

your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. He quickly added that a second was like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments, Jesus said, hang ALL the law and prophets.

Love God and love neighbor. Jesus called that foundational. I am simplistic enough to accept the verdict of the hymn, “They will know we are Christians by our love.” Micah put it plainly. What the Lord requires of us is “to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” I just want to ask the media and self-identified evangelical Christians, where is the love? Where is the justice? Where is the mercy? Where is the humility? I hear judgement and hate, not love. I hear derision of ‘the other,’ not love. I hear a desire for revenge and punishment, not mercy.

Regardless of political party or policy preferences, the love of all of God’s children is paramount to the Christian.

In John’s first letter we read, “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God, everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.” Christians can faithfully hold a variety of political opinions and

social understandings. But the voice that lacks compassion, lacks mercy, lacks care for the other, lacks love, is not a Christian voice. Jesus and the apostles could not have been more clear.

So, what do we do with this?

First, we need to listen to the sound of our own voices. Do they resonate with compassion, mercy, care, and love? If, in our anger or dismay, we get pulled into the divisiveness and hate so prevalent, then our voice also loses its authenticity. Jesus lived under the thumb of Caesar. He did not let that change who he was. We begin by being who we are called to be.

Secondly, no matter the circumstance, we want to keep doing what we are called to do. What is that? In the judgement passage in Matthew 25, Jesus divides the sheep from the goats. Jesus said the criteria used in judgement was who did or did not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the prisoner. Earlier I wrote that love is at the core of discipleship. These actions are tangible love. Paying attention to the needs in our community and beyond, and addressing them to the best of our ability is what we are called to do. Nothing going on in Washington should stop us from this.

By the way, this is a judgement passage. Christians in general far prefer talking about grace

than judgement, understandably. Remember, though, grace without accountability is simply indulgence, what theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called cheap grace. God forgives our sin, but that is not a free pass to live however we want knowing there are no consequences. There is a reason why, in worship, words of pardon and assurance follow confession and repentance.

Thirdly, neither accept nor embrace the hateful rhetoric or actions so prevalent right now. Our baptismal vows include the promise to resist evil and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us to respond to hate nonviolently, but not passively. Showing up and speaking up are essential for confronting injustice. Words not spoken cannot be heard.

Showing up and speaking up can be hard, but there is something positive in being part of the resistance instead of the status quo. It calls for firmer resolve and clearer thinking and stronger commitment. Mainline churches have operated far too long from a position of contentment. There is an international pull toward dictators and it behooves those of us who love democracy to ask why. Those of us belonging to the Christian faith need to challenge ourselves about how we have failed to give a compelling vision of Christ-like living and discipleship that redefines power and wealth and teaches greatness in servanthood. Christian Nationalists

have the stage. Not us. That must be at least partly on us. Complacency might prove to be our sin. This is a time that could prove to be the impetus for what Lincoln called the better angels in us to get busy.

Will there be a cost? Undoubtedly. I say this because there is always a price, normally paid by those seeking dignity and freedom. The price has included Witch Trials, the Trail of Tears, Civil War, McCarthyism, Pettis Bridge, and dozens more examples, thousands internationally. There is always a price. Bear in mind that the main symbol of our faith is the cross. God sent Jesus to show us how much God loves us. The cross shows us that God's love is often unwanted and rejected. Jesus did not dodge the cross and does not want us to dodge it either. Indeed, Jesus said take up your cross, not grab a seat in the lounge chair and enjoy the ride.

Of course, the other main symbol of our faith is the empty tomb – the sign that God refuses to allow God's love to be rejected. You cannot put God in a grave and expect God to stay there. That is the hope we hold. God's love will not be thwarted.

To the Christian Nationalists and Evangelical right, I say believe what you will, but I hold a different perspective. It is a perspective rooted in the Shema – Hear, O Israel, the Lord is One, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and

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Germany Reflections

Our youth and chaperones enjoyed a wonderful time with our friends from Klein Schwechten in eastern Germany this summer and look forward to hosting them in Frederick in 2026. During the trip this summer, each ERUCC participant shared a reflection with the congregation through our Facebook group, which we are delighted to share in part with you.

This fall, we will also welcome around two dozen youth and chaperones from western Germany, visiting Frederick October 11 – 19. Be on the lookout for opportunities to support this partnership, worship together, and join in fellowship.

1. Quynn Adkins

The past 2 days have been a blur. We traveled to Goldbeck and met up with everyone and had very good food and ice breakers. Then our second day ... we traveled to a pool and joined a baptism, we got to swim and play games ... later in the night we met up with the others and played games and we got to ride their motor bikes.



2. Hollie Mercier

Yesterday, we bid farewell to our host families and journeyed to the picturesque resort town of Lake Arendsee.

Our first day here was filled with adventure and camaraderie: geocaching, ice cream, icebreakers, and reflection. Today we visited the stunning Benedictine Convent of St. Mary, part of the Romanesque Road, and cooled off with a refreshing swim in the lake—followed by more ice cream!





3. Isaac Pomeroy

Today we did a dinosaur tour and took some pictures with the dinosaur. Earlier the ERUCC youth and German group had a workshop about self-care and self-love. The previous day we went to the lake with inflatables, then had a barbecue, and later went bowling.



4. Camryn Huenger

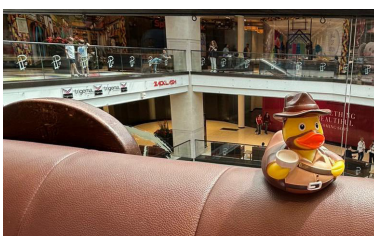
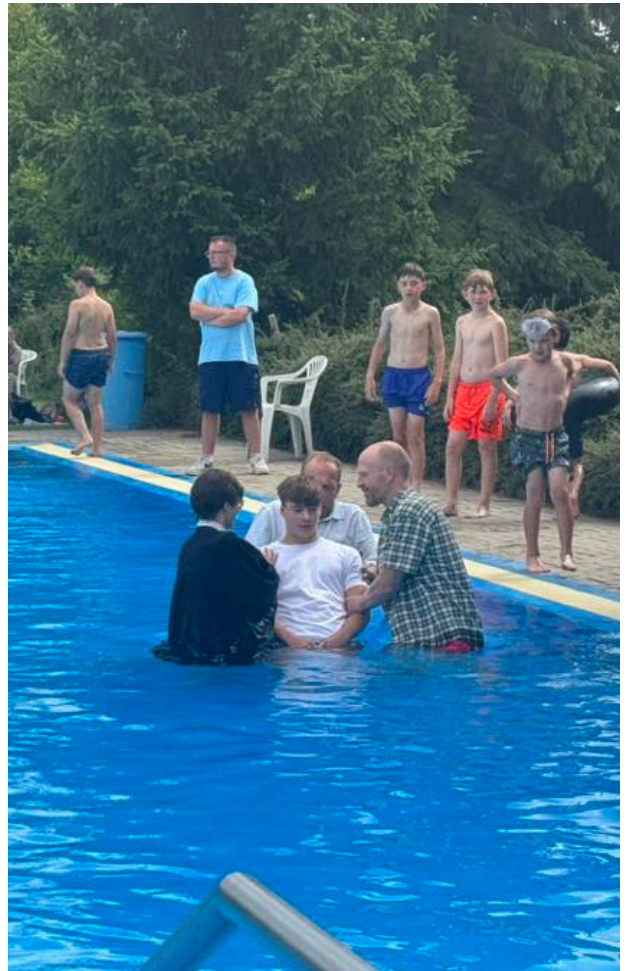
Today I learned different things, such as how clocks work and can be made. The church we visited was huge and every sound echoed throughout the entire building with beautiful sculptures. It was fun eating ice cream and wandering through Seehausen with friends. Another important thing was reconnecting with my host family — I missed them!





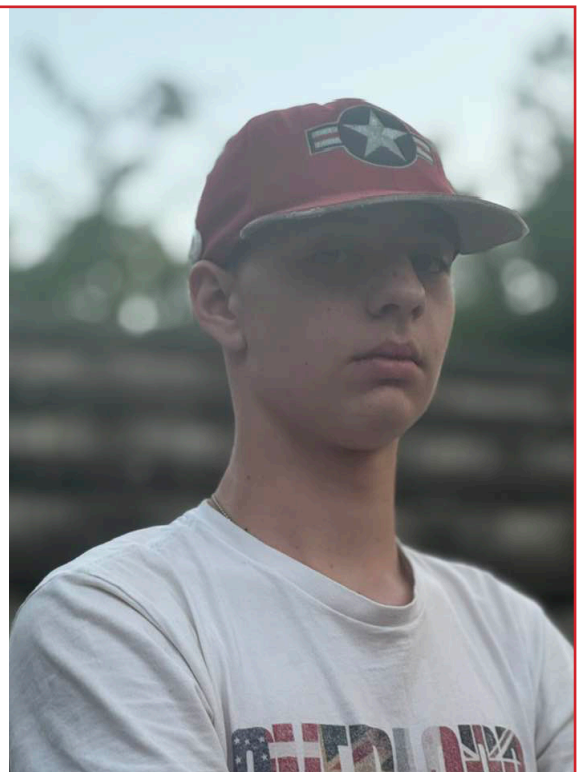
5. Pastor Kirstin

On Sunday, our youth did a great job leading worship: sharing prayers, scripture, skits, reflections, and songs. Afterwards, we enjoyed a cake bazaar. We [visited] a hospice care center in Stendhal.



6. Eli Baker

Berlin. After taking a regional express train, we visited the Room of Silence, Holocaust Memorial, and Museum of German History. I liked the WW1 trench area at the museum today. I had a big dopamine rush because I'm such a nerd who loves WW1 and I know many things about it.





8. Matt Pomeroy

In Germany, we visited towns and villages, each with its own clock tower or steeple. Our youth built deep relationships with host families and German youth — learning, laughing, and sharing stories despite language and cultural differences. Camp at Arendsee challenged comfort zones and created fast friendships. On our last day, we feasted and shared blessings, grateful for the love and joy of our German partners. Our youth are brave, thoughtful, and will do great things in the years to come.



7. Katie Zander

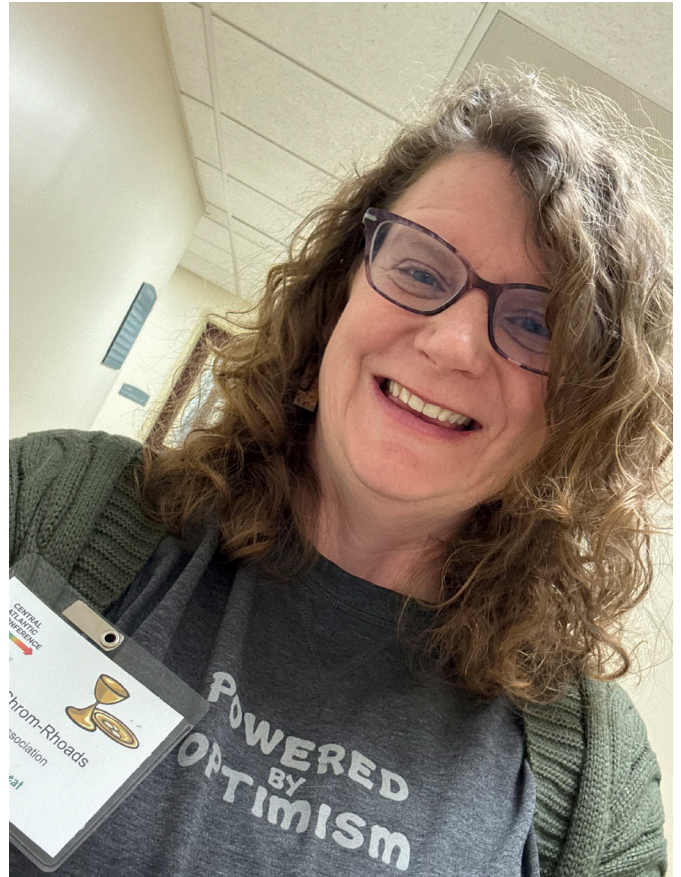
Today we went to a hospice and got a tour. We learned about the process of death and how they make everyone comfortable. This visit tied into our theme of loving our neighbors, as most workers are volunteers.



Central Atlantic Conference Retreat

Pastor Kirstin attended the CAC Annual Clergy Retreat February 18-20 at Bon Secours. The retreat leader was esteemed Seminary Professor and Author, Rev. Dr. Mary Luti, herself a retired UCC clergy. She led multiple sessions including breakout times around the theme of Communion and her book *DO THIS: Communion for Just and Courageous Living*. Communion is theological, experiential, expected, devotional, formational, ethical, and a witness to justice. She emphasized connecting to the aspect of the meal, that we have this very special shared time together around a meal where we re-member Jesus eating with us and restoring

the “mealness” of the meal where Christ comes to us who are hungry for justice, love, and peace as well as connection and community. She also challenged us to prepare communion in a way that remembers how important this meal is to justice as a key element to the gathering as well, as an extension of remembering and giving to the poor, as an people with privileges that miss seeing the poor, the poverty of flesh, and the need of embodiment to recognize those who worked for the meal and those who we need to feed. Whenever we come to the table, she says, we are doing justice work and defending bodies.



Pastor Kirstin attends Central Atlantic Conference retreat on Communion with Rev Dr. Mary Luti. Seminary Educator and Author, retired UCC pastor.



ERUCC Stuffs the Bus

Thanks to the generous hearts of our ERUCC community, we collected three overflowing bins of school supplies as part of the annual Stuff the Bus campaign! This United Way of Frederick County initiative brings together local partners like our church to ensure every student in Frederick County begins the school year with the essential tools they need to thrive in the classroom.

ERUCC at the Asbury UMC Community Block Party - July 19

ERUCC was glad to join the joy and fellowship of Asbury United Methodist Church's Annual Community Block Party on July 19—a celebration that brings neighbors together with free food, games, music, health screenings, and school-supply giveaways. Sixteen of our volunteers showed up in shifts to share ERUCC's wide welcome, reminding the Frederick community that we are here for connection, belonging, and care. We are grateful to Asbury for hosting such an important day of outreach and proud to be part of the "village" that makes Frederick stronger.



Holy Casserollers!

One quiet but important mission of the ERUCC family is providing meals for individuals and families experiencing a medical or other life event. When pastoral or lay staff connect with a family in need, they pass along contact information to Holy Casseroller Conductor Kelly Esslinger, who works with the family to learn how many meals are needed, the number of people in the household, dietary preferences, drop-off times, and other important details. Kelly then compiles this information into a MealTrain and shares it with the Holy Casseroller list. Volunteers sign up to provide one or more meals over the requested days or weeks.

Many hands make Holy Casserolling easy! To join this ministry, email Kelly at kellbell.erucc@gmail.com to be added to the contact list. If you're curious but unsure how it works, you can look over examples at tinyurl.com/holycasserollers.

And remember: if you or your family are ever in need of temporary meal support due to illness or another life event, please let ERUCC pastoral or lay staff know so your church family can help.

Finally, a big thank-you to Kelly for her devoted leadership of this caring ministry!

Our Historic Clock Tower: Work in Progress

Since mid-May, scaffolding has been rising steadily around our Trinity Chapel historic clock tower and steeple, creating what David Cooney calls “an engineering marvel.” What began as a careful build-out of platforms now stretches all the way to the very top, giving crews access to every part of the tower for restoration work. The sight of scaffolding reaching into the sky has become part of downtown Frederick’s summer landscape and is a visible reminder that this important preservation project is in full swing.

A Bird’s Eye View

On July 23, Sedonia Martin organized a hard hat tour for local and state elected officials to see the project firsthand and generate community interest. David also made the climb to the top, which he later joked “either proves that I’m willing to go to great heights for this church, or I lack judgment. I’m not sure which!” From that impressive vantage point, he could see both the extensive work still to be done and the incredible craftsmanship already underway.

Community Recognition

Our restoration project received wonderful coverage in The Frederick News-Post, with a front-page article featuring our scaffolded steeple and coverage by Frederick City Media. This kind of visibility helps with our ongoing community fundraising efforts as we approach the final stretch.

Looking Toward Completion

The crews continue making steady progress with the goal of finishing in October, though as anyone familiar with historic restoration knows, the timeline could easily stretch into early November. But by late fall, certainly by the Christmas season, we should hear our chimes ringing out over Frederick once again. What an exciting moment that will be!

Your Part in the Story

Thanks to the generosity of our congregation and the wider Frederick community, we’re very close to reaching our fundraising goal. But as David reminded us recently, “If you really want to be part of this but missed the original campaign or want to make a second gift ... despair no more! It’s still time.”

Gifts can be sent to the church marked for the “Clock Tower” or made online at tinyurl.com/ERclcktwr or by scanning the QR code below. Whether you’re contributing for the first time or feel called to give again, every gift helps carry us to the finish line and ensures this beloved landmark continues to stand strong for generations to come.



The project is happening, it’s getting done, and it’s going to be fantastic. Get excited and keep watching this remarkable restoration take place!





M.C. Keegan-Ayer, Frederick County Council Member; Samantha Stetzler and Ysela Bravo, Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater



Jennie Russell; Kris Fair, Maryland State Delegate; Kevin Valiente, Frederick City Media



Jaci Clayton definitely has the birds eye view!



Michael O'Connor, Mayor of Frederick; Lee Redmond, Office of Steve McKay; Sedonia Martin; David Cooney; Peter Brehm



Larry Maples enjoying the excitement of the crane!



Link, Max, and Katie helped Ingrid (seated) and Kitty (not present) move a king size mattress plus bed frame and box springs from their bedroom to the basement to make way for Kitty's new bed, arriving next week when Kitty is able to return home.

Thank you, Linc, Max, and Katie for making this caring congregational assistance possible!

A New Chapter continued from page 1
including adults, will run from 9:15 to 10:15 AM. Sunday School classes for Pre-K, K-2, 3-5, Middle School and Confirmation, and High School students create a space for all to find their place in our vibrant community. Adults are invited to participate in Bible Study and faith formation activities that promise rich discussion and spiritual growth. Our youngest learners in Pre-K through fifth grade will have the added joy of Children's Music and Movement in the last quarter-hour of class each week.

Are you ready to create space together to share stories from our journey and dreams for the chapters yet to be written? This new beginning represents the ongoing story of our faith community, where every person belongs and every voice matters in writing the next pages of our connected life of faith together.



We commissioned and blessed our lay leaders on May 11



Our Welcome Table ensures guests and visitors are welcomed each Sunday



Kyle Miller, an ERUCC deacon, prepares the hymn board for Sunday worship



Counting Teams ensure our offerings are diligently recorded with integrity each week

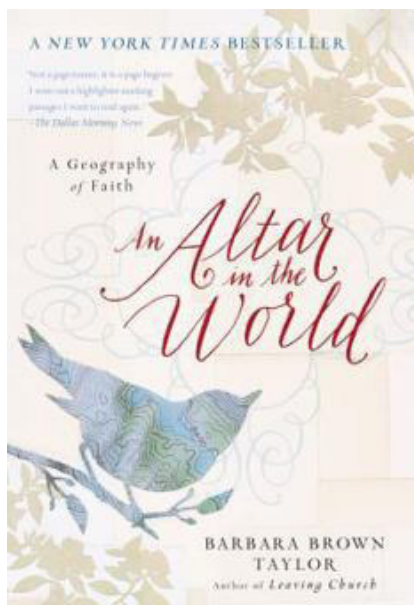


The AV Team kept things running smoothly on Easter Sunday

Keeping the Faith continued from page 21

soul and mind. This is the greatest commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Everything hinges on these two commands. Everything. Jesus said it and I believe it.

Where are we headed in all of this? I do not know. This I do know. I know that God was God when Nebuchadnezzar swept through Judah; and when Jesus was crucified at the hands of Rome and the religious power elite; and when the Pope was burning dissenters at the stake; and when preachers were blessing the slave markets; and when Native-Americans were being murdered and forced from their lands; and when Hitler's tanks were rolling across Europe; and now as Trump calls any who dare oppose him evil. All the despots of history are in graves and their heirs will join them, but God is still God, and so it will forever be. Keep the faith. Live the faith. We are people of the cross and the empty tomb. Nothing changes that.



Theology Among the People

(formerly Tuesday Morning Bible Study)

with Rev. Dr. Rebecca Shillingburg

Tuesdays beginning September 9th

North Room / Zoom 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Our new name reflects the diverse nature of this class. We've explored topics ranging from what we believe to how the truth of the Bible is more than we get when we read it literally. In September, we will finish the last chapters of *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor. This beautifully written book has helped us discover the sacred in the small things we do and see every day of our life. We hope you will join us.



Members of the Tuesday Morning Bible Study enjoy an end of the year luncheon



A Prayer

by Kevin Coyle

O Lord,

In these tense and divided times, center our lives in You. Help us to not cancel people, but instead open our hearts in empathy. In our quest for justice, give us the courage to forgive and offer words that heal. When our good efforts seem to be in vain, remind us that You labor in this world still. You reside in every person, quietly nudging humankind to good. As many of us look to the future with trepidation and worry, help us to enrich the present moment. In a spirit of solidarity, help us to abide with our fellow human beings, no matter what side of the political spectrum they hail from or what religious faith they practice. Even as factions continue to clash in this nation, bring us together in peace, grounding us in the love that can surely overcome.

Amen.

Bible Study for Adults: Learning to Recognize the Bible's Sharp Edges

A couple of years ago, my family gave me a pair of knife-proof gloves. Why? I had a history of accidents with sharp objects—cutting myself with box cutters while helping my daughter move; slicing myself and not the Thanksgiving turkey—that sort of thing. They were thinking, “If he’s going to be handling sharp tools, he needs some protection—until he learns the appropriate techniques!”

We could say the same thing about reading the Bible. We should have some gloves to protect us when we pick up and handle the Bible, lest we cut ourselves on some of its sharp edges. Sharp edges that are hidden in some of the “sweet” stories we tell our children.

The Good Samaritan, for instance. When our children first hear this story in Sunday School, the lesson for them is that “we should all be good neighbors and take care of someone we meet who needs help.” Instead of their hearts being warmed by this charming little story, Jesus’ original listeners ... many of them ... would have been outraged. His point to them? When the Bible says “Love your neighbor as yourself,” it means your “neighbor” may well be your worst enemy. Righteous Jews of Jesus’ day detested Samaritans. To think of helping a Samaritan ... or even worse, being helped by one ... well, that was simply outrageous ... beyond comprehension!

Understanding this story today means realizing—and accepting—that our neighbors include people of color, foreigners, illegal immigrants, Muslims, and LGBTQ+ people. The very people that some in our country don’t think should be allowed to live here.

So, how do we learn to read the Bible on more than just the surface level? How do we learn to recognize those sharp edges? Short of going to seminary, the best way is to study it together in a small group ... to recognize just how counter-cultural the message of God is in our society today. After all, Jesus didn’t get killed by the Romans just because he told stories with nice morals or healed sick people. He was killed because he was a threat to the powers that be ... because he wanted to turn society upside down. And his message is just as relevant today as it was in his time.

At ERUCC, we have two opportunities weekly for adults to learn how to handle this Bible with its sharp edges: Sunday mornings at 9:15 AM (the new starting time for children’s classes) or Wednesday evenings at 7:00 PM. Both classes are hybrid: you can attend in person in the North Room or via Zoom. Both classes are ongoing but newcomers are welcome at any time. No prerequisites—you just need a Bible.

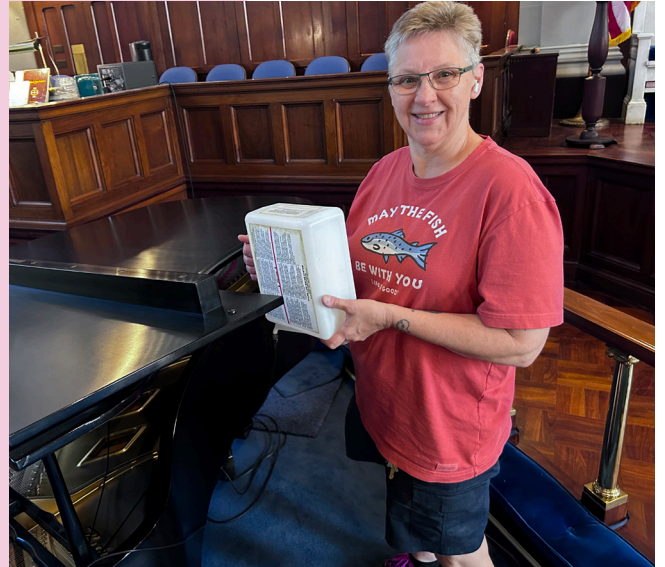
This year, we’ll be organized by short studies (six or seven classes), so you can start and stop at the beginning or end of a topic. The Sunday morning class will begin with a six-session dive into the Gospel of Mark; on Wednesday evening we will begin with a six-session study of two 8th century prophets—Hosea and Amos. Watch for more information and a schedule for each topic.



The Worship Design Team prepares for Pentecost



Sophia Carliss leads our Thought for the Day during worship



Jaci "waters" the piano to keep humidity levels just right



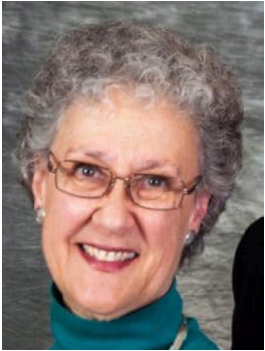
Nancy Jones and Rev. Sandra Dorsainvil lovingly prepare a meal for the volunteer medical providers with Mission of Mercy.



Larry shares one of his signature jokes with Ann

This I Believe

Carolyn Roberts



By the time I graduated high school, our family had moved ten times, and I'd been enrolled in eight different schools. Before

our second move when I was four, I was taking part in our Presbyterian church's Christmas program. I'm told I recited "My Dolly and Me." By fourth grade, I'd graduated to being Mary in the Christmas nativity program. Different town, different church. Yet even then, I'd learned that church was a community where individuals of any age could be welcomed and valued.

That experience was especially critical during the vulnerable teen years when we moved three more times. With every move, our family looked for a church that had socially-relevant preaching, a love of Bible study, a solid ChrisEd program, and a strong youth group. The churches we joined not only welcomed us into their communities but also provided leadership opportunities. To a degree. When I was a high school senior, our beloved Associate Pastor called each senior into his office. For boys who'd shown leadership potential, he suggested they consider a call to ordained ministry. He suggested I consider ChrisEd. That was not my calling, and I went into public school teaching.

In 1968. By my second year, I was looking for something that gave me a better foundation for teaching the 30% of my middle school students who were African-American. I desperately needed history, sociology, theology, literature, music, art, because I'd grown up in the Wanda-Vision deserts of white, middle-class America. And in the turmoil of the early 70's, with the peace, civil rights, women's, and growing farmworker's movements, I rapidly was learning there was a lot I didn't know.

My mother discovered a summer program offered through the Graduate Theological Union's Center for Urban Black Studies. A much bigger, more diverse world opened up to me, including a call to ordained ministry first articulated by my late husband, John Deckenback. This I believe:

At its best, church can be a community where each person is welcomed and valued.

- I believe that others often play a pivotal role in helping us identify our calling.
- I believe that as people of faith, we are called to take seriously the biblical foundations of our faith tradition, and to re-imagine and re-form the ways in which those stories speak to us in our time.

- I believe that we grow in faith and in faithfulness when we join hands with those who break down culture's purity codes which elevate one group at the expense of another.
- I believe that we are called to ministries of transformation, to ministries of healing and inclusion, grace, and generosity.
- I believe that oppressive systems are inherently violent, and that especially within those systems—whether they are systems of empire or economy, race or gender—we are called to attend to those in need, and to stand with those whose voices need to be heard.
- I believe that each voice is important, and that one voice alone can never tell the whole story.
- I believe that change for the better is always possible.
- I believe that beauty and humor and mystery can be in-breakings of the holy.
- I believe that love heals.

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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

Let's Study the Bible, North Room

9:15 AM – 12:00 PM

Nursery Care

9:15 – 10:00 AM

Children's Sunday School

Pre-K, Nursery

K – 2nd Grade, Liz Coffey Room

3rd – 5th Grade, Thomas Room

9:15 – 10:15 AM

Youth Sunday School

Middle School Youth/Confirmation, Trinity Chapel

High School Youth, Trinity Chapel

10:00 – 10:15 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

*Participating children are dismissed from Worship
(2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sundays)*

11:30 AM

Fellowship, Downtown Community Room



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United Church of Christ**

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Ministers & Staff of ERUCC

Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan – *Intentional Interim Senior Pastor*

Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads – *Associate Pastor for Faith Formation & Parish Life*

Alison E. Shafer – *Director of Music*

Tyler L. York – *Executive Church Administrator*

Jaci Clayton – *Facilities Manager*

Ann Watkins ~ *Administrative Assistant/Receptionist*

Ashley Murphy – *Nursery Attendant*

Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel – *Pastor Emerita*

Rev. Fred Wenner – *Pastor Emeritus*

Trinity Chimes design and production – Angela Brittain