

Heartbeat of
Justice

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 lobby. We would love to meet and learn more about you, and we are available to answer your questions. 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 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 people 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 aged 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.

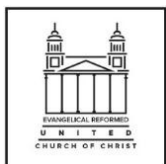
There is more information about our church in this bulletin and on our website: www.erucc.org.

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 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent

10:30 AM



The numbered hymns are from The New Century Hymnal

**All who are able may stand*

Bold text read in unison

GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

CHORAL PRELUDE

You'll Come

Spirit

– B. Fraser

THRESHOLD MOMENT

The First Step

read by Pam Shepp

– written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

Watch any parent. It starts with the first step.
They kneel down. They smile with anticipation.
They reach for their baby, calling and cooing them forward.
And then before they know it, they're running behind a bike. They're yelling,
"Keep pedalling! You got it! I'm right here!"
And they're jumping up and down,
because that little red helmet passed the mailbox.
And then, just like that, they're driving circles in the church parking lot.
They're giving instructions about easing on and off the pedal.
They're having conversations about curfew and heartbreak.
And then, before they know it, they're standing in a hospital room.
Their heart is bursting. And they say, *"Put her head right here.*
Rock her gently. Do you remember the nursery rhymes?
You were born for this."

The first step is always the hardest,
but you, beloved, were born for this.

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE OF JOY

The Caughy Family

Reader 1: O God, we light the third candle of Advent: the Candle of Joy.

The Candle of Joy is lighted.

Reader 2: We look to John, the one you sent, to point us to your light. The light will come into our world and enlighten everyone.

Reader 1: God sent John the Baptizer to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Christ, the true Light of the World. John called for people to repent of their sins and to live faithfully. He baptized with a cleansing water and proclaimed the new life that Christ, the one who would follow him, would bring. This Advent, we ask for God's mercy and a joyful new beginning.

***People:* Merciful God, we give thanks that you send messengers like John to call us to greater faith. We ask that in these days we prepare for you in prayer and acts of holy compassion. Forgive us and lead us to your light. Amen.**

Choral Response

– tune PICARDY

**Shine on us, O God of justice;
Guide our path through gloom of night;
Bear within us Wisdom's glory;
Come to us, O Christ the Light**

*OPENING HYMN

Give Us Your Peace

– J. Manibusan

***Refrain:* Give us your peace, O God;
Give us your peace, your peace.
Give us your peace, O God;
Give us your peace, your peace.**

*CALL TO TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

Friends, often in life, when we make mistakes, we want to keep those mistakes to ourselves. We don't want to advertise our blunders. We don't want to highlight our failings. We can be tempted to brush those things under the rug and move on.

But when it comes to God, there is nothing we need to brush under the rug. God welcomes and loves our full, honest, messy selves—blunders and all.

So let us go before God in prayer, trusting that there is nothing we need to hide from our Creator. Let us pray.

***PRAYER FOR GRACE**

Courageous God, you invite us to live into our call.

You invite us to act, to serve, and to trust.

Instead of responding with a resounding “yes,” we often hide our face.

We dig our heels in.

We look for someone else to volunteer.

Spark courage in us.

Remind us that every person is capable of making a difference.

Remind us that even when we’re scared, we are not alone.

You invite us forward.

With baby steps we hope, we pray. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE**

Family of faith, no matter where your path has led you in the past, today is a new day. So join me in declaring this good news:

We are known. We are forgiven! We are sent to serve.

May we step forward in faith, always moving closer to God’s call. Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Breath Prayer: *inhale:* Let it be. *exhale:* Let it be with me.

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. A special Advent activity is available in the wiggle space. Junior Church for children ages 5 through 5th grade will resume next Sunday.

THE SCRIPTURES

Jeremiah 1:4-10 OT page 698

Luke 1:26-39 NT page 56

Reader: May God bless the reading of this word.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Pam Shepp

MORNING PRAYERS

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

There is a simple joy to be found in sharing what we have. Regardless of how much or how little that may be, a portion belongs to God. What God desires is not an altar of sacrifices, but an outstretched hand. Give what you can, and delight in the joy your gift will bring.

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

Light of the World

Spirit
– L. Daigle

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Precious God, take these gifts in the spirit they were given, with joy and love for our siblings around the world. Let us remember that we all have times of trouble. We will each stand before you, hands clasped in prayer, begging for relief. Use what we have here to bring that relief where it is needed most.

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

With gratitude, we celebrate our gifts from you and dedicate our gifts to bring peace to this earth. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN**

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

#107

**¹ Awake! Awake and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
to open wide the heavenly door,
and lives now inside us forever.**

**² To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a-singing,
whose humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing.
Music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of the anthems roll
to shatter all hate and injustice.**

**³ In deepest night Christ's coming shall be,
when all the world is despairing,
as morning light so quiet and free,
so warm and gentle and caring.
One without voice breaks forth in song,
a lame one leaps in wonder,
the weak are raised above the strong,
and weapons are broken asunder.**

**⁴ Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though cold the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer,
and love, our endless story,
may God fill every day we share,
and bring us at last into glory.**

*BENEDICTION

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit.
May you reach for each other's hands.
May you choose courage whenever you can.
And in all things, may you remember
that good news is louder than fear.
In the name of the one who calls, the one who sends,
and the one who journeys with— go in peace and *be not afraid*.
Amen.

*CHORAL BENEDICTION

An Old Irish Blessing

– T. Jennings

**May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
and the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again, until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of God's hand until we meet again.**

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

POSTLUDE



**We thank Laura Walling and Joe Baker
for sharing their gifts with us in worship today!**

Worship Notes: Liturgy by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. Offertory from
Called the Holy Way: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday of Advent Year A, written by Maria Mankin.

Please join us for **Fellowship**, where today a light lunch will be served as we meet for our Congregational Meeting 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 Audrey Rayfield in memory of her father, Donald Baker, US Army.

Attendance Last Sunday: 11 at 8:30 AM, 134 at 10:30 AM, and 54 online.



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

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

Serving Today: December 14

Deacons: Robin A. Brady Slifer
Robin L. Brady-Slifer
Elder: Starr Schaeberle
Scripture Reader: Pam Shepp
Acolyte: Laurel Nguyen-Powell
Greeters: Cathie Duncan, Robin Cooney
Rob Smith, Paul McGinley
Welcome Table: Rissah Watkins
Audio/Visual: Kelly Esslinger, Larry Martin
Jack Day
Nursery: Kate Fromknecht
Fellowship: Ave Barr, Cliff Barr
Joan Maples, Allen Maples
Jen Powell, Pat Condo
Bud Rossig

Serving Next Week: December 21

Tommie Bradshaw, Kyle Miller

Matt Huetting
Young Adults
Vivian Bowman
Tom Ford, Rachel Ford
Cliff Barr, Felecia Bishop
Betsy Selby, Elizabeth Slade
Ethan Kline, Jeff Baker
Jack Day
Emily Spear
Karen Justice, Marj Berkheimer
Peter Brehm, Felecia Bishop
Rob McGuire, Alex Martinez

Next Sunday: December 21 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

When You're Afraid, Give Me Your Hand

Matthew 1:18-25

“Give me your hand” might be counter to how we usually respond to fear, but what if fear can result in connection instead of isolation? Joseph moves through his fears of rejection and shame to stand in solidarity with Mary. Their bond makes them stronger. We don’t live out our callings in isolation—our communal flourishing depends on each person stepping into their calling despite their fear. How can we offer support to one another? Where can we reach out when fear makes us feel isolated? When do we need to accept an outstretched hand? And can we use our power and privilege, like Joseph, to stand in solidarity with people whose lives are at risk?

*Today, we celebrate our annual **lessons and carols** service with our college students reading the scriptures. The Senior Choir will be singing.*



Mary's Yes

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:26-39 | Photography with digital drawing

ARTIST STATEMENT

In the *sixth month* of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel goes to Nazareth to find Mary. I was six months pregnant with my second daughter when I reread this scripture and began this image, so at first, this detail seemed like a happy coincidence. But as I pondered it, I wondered if Elizabeth's pregnancy might have everything to do with Mary's willingness to say yes to this wild, wonderful—but risky and terrifying—undertaking.

Elizabeth's pregnancy provides reassurance that Mary can trust the angel's impossible news. By the sixth month, Mary will be able to see for herself that Elizabeth is truly pregnant. By the sixth month, Mary can place her hands on Elizabeth's belly and giggle as the baby leaps and kicks. By the sixth month, the risk of miscarriage has significantly decreased. By the sixth month, Elizabeth will be emotionally, mentally, and physically preparing for birth. Her miracle is real, even as it is yet to be born. Therefore, Mary can rest her hope in an emerging—not empty—promise.

Mary's willingness to say "yes" is also fortified by the assurance that she is not stepping forward alone. Even as fears surely surround her, Mary will go to Elizabeth for protection and comfort. She won't fulfill her calling without support. Her hope will be strengthened in solidarity.

In this image, we see the angel greeting Mary in the form of dappled light. Mary's back is turned to the angel, but we see her in the process of pivoting toward the warmth of the cascading light. I imagine this is the moment after the angel responds to her initial question, "How can this be?" After hearing the angel's response, Mary closes her eyes, imagining her cousin Elizabeth and perhaps her many ancestors holding her up as she prepares to step forward. The wrap around her head carries the angel's good news, anointing her with the promise that fear won't stop her. Embroidered along her neckline is Mary's willing response: "Here I am." Her lantern earring is a sign to each of us, to anyone who is fearful. It's as if Mary herself becomes a lantern, emanating courage in the face of a fearful calling, lighting a way forward.

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.

Izzie Sims (friend of Molly Black)	Ginny Peters	Carol Spera (mother of Mark Ulrich)
Holly Davis	Tom Ford	Emogene Wyand
Debbie Jennings (friend of Kathleen Jefferson)	Karen Stitely	Bob Pinner
Mateo Fisher	Donna Baumgardner Smith (friend of Sandra Trout)	Jim Baldree (father of Chuck Baldree)
Donna Logee	Bill Cassell (brother of Ave Barr)	Lee Thomas
Jason Rhoads	The Murray/Lennox/Cable Family	Marcia Eisenstein
Charlie and his mother, Amanda Brown (friend of Rachael Bowman)	Rhea Stein	Derek C. Hupp (grandson of Beanie & Gaylon Cornell)
Robert Debonis (uncle of Sophia Carliss)	Doris Esslinger	Wayne Kolb (friend of Stefan and Judi Mach and Tony and Linda LaFianza)
Sandy Maples (sister-in-law of Allen and Joan Maples)	Sandra Trout	Jeannette Johnson
Confirmands and Mentors	Charlie Van Eman (son of friends of Kathleen and Niel Jefferson)	Jackie Keyser (sister-in-law of Betsy and Phil Selby)
Betsy Fisher	Mary Staley	Marcy Channell (daughter of Jo Ann Fritz)
Laura Duncan Broderick (Cathie and Will's daughter)	Pat Condo	Paige Coffey
Barbara Heverley	Wells Condo	Fran Wenner
Todd Starr (nephew of Mary Staley)	Kitty Bradley	Bonnie Devilbiss
Sharon DiDonato (aunt of Darryl Glick, friend of Mark Ulrich)	Beanie Cornell	Tina Prescott (daughter-in-law of Barbara & Bill Prescott)
Isa Baxter (granddaughter of Kathy Gelles-baxter)	Raymond Slifer (father of Robin A. Brady-Slifer)	Heleen (sister of Karin Mens)
	Tom Frazier	Kathy Blue Shores (friend of Jean Fish & Barb Biser)
	Pauline Marendt	
	Kayla Merry (niece of Kim Sexton)	

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Sharon Reith following the death of her mother. Please keep Sharon and her family in your hearts and prayers.

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, December 14, 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 parking lot.

“Do you have a favorite family food you always have around the holidays? Are the ingredients shelf-stable? In my family, appetizers are the thing at any family gathering, especially canned clams, oysters, and sardines all on a cracker. I prefer crackers, cheese, and meat. I'll be bringing those. Use your imagination.”

You are invited to bring any shelf-stable, unopened, and unexpired items to worship. You can place them on the chancel table as you arrive. We will offer a prayer of dedication over the items before sending them out to bless our neighbors. If you're unable to bring donations on Sunday, you can place them in the pantry at any time.

Contact: Kim Sexton, mkssexton@comcast.net.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, December 14

Community Room / Zoom, ~ 12:00 PM

Register to attend via Zoom: tinyurl.com/reg1214er

Mark your calendar for Sunday, December 14, immediately following the 10:30 AM service. This is a vital opportunity for us to gather as a community, share updates, and make important decisions for our church's future.

Agenda Highlights:

- Review and approval of the proposed 2026 Mission Spending Plan
- Progress on the Historic Clock Tower project
- Response to Consecration Sunday
- Study Group plans for our Congregation Name
- Settled Senior Pastor Search and Call Committee

We Are the Church! Your voice matters, and your participation is essential.

Lunch will be provided, and we invite you to bring a dessert to share. Let's come together to celebrate, plan, and grow as a church family!

ORDER POINSETTIAS FOR OUR ALTAR THIS CHRISTMAS

Order deadline: Sunday, December 14

Please find details and an order form on the inside back cover of this bulletin, on printed forms at the back of the sanctuary, or order online at tinyurl.com/ERpnt25.



LET'S TALK: ADVENT

Sundays, December 7 & 14

North Room, 9:15 – 10:15 AM

Led by Kim Sexton. As we delve deeper into the theme from Sanctified Arts, *What Do You Fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent*, we will use the daily devotional that comes with the program as our book and supplement with other resources. There will also be an art project as part of our lesson and we will find ways to share our light in the world.

Questions? Contact Kim Sexton, mkssexton@comcast.net.

SACRED CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LIFE TRANSITIONS

Tuesday, December 16

Flora Room, 2:00 PM

Join us for our monthly gathering to share stories and challenges related to life's changes, body limitations, and shifts in dependency. This is a sacred space to listen, pray, and connect as we navigate these transitions. This time of holy sharing emphasizes the importance of leaning on each other and recognizing that we are not alone in our journeys.

Contact: Ave Barr or Linda Coyle with questions.

ADVENT MIDWEEK: WALKING & PRAYING THE LABYRINTH

Wednesdays, December 17, 24, and 31

Various locations, 12:00 – 1:00 PM

Walking a labyrinth is an ancient spiritual discipline. This year, during Advent, we invite you to gather midweek at various locations in our area to walk a labyrinth. Look for more details in the Advent edition of *Trinity Chimes*.

- **December 17**, All Saints Episcopal Church Labyrinth, meet at the garden entrance, turning left just past the church
 - **December 24**, Canvas Labyrinth borrowed from Trinity UMC, in the Community Room
 - **December 31**, Trinity Chapel Labyrinth
-

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

Thursday, December 18

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.

ALL-CHURCH, INTERGENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Sunday, December 21

Sanctuary, 9:30 AM

Join our Intergenerational Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 21!

- **Children, please arrive at 9:15 AM**, in the children's Sunday School area, where you will choose a costume.
- Some **youth** will be invited in advance to take a reading part. Other youth will assist the younger children in moving from the Sunday School area to the sanctuary and with their exits and entrances "on stage" at the appropriate times.
- **Anyone of any age** can be a sheep, an angel, or a wise person following a star from the East. Costumes for these roles will be at the back of the sanctuary.

You won't want to miss this fun opportunity to "play" together as we remember and reenact the story of that first Christmas. Please join us!

ADVENT 2025: SHARE A DAILY BREATH PRAYER ON FACEBOOK

This year, we have a prayer focus word for each day of Advent. Here's how you can use the focus word and demonstrate breath prayers to our members:

- Pick up a list of words with corresponding breath prayers for each day of Advent from the back of the sanctuary.
- Sign up for a day. <https://bit.ly/43GuXQE>.
- Make a video for your day that is approximately one minute long that shares the word, shares your connection to the word for Advent, and demonstrates the breath prayer.
- Upload your video to our ERUCC Facebook group on your scheduled day, or send it to Pastor Kirstin in a text, and she will upload it for you.

If you are not already a member of our internal church Facebook group, email erucc@erucc.org to request an invitation.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING: "BE THE LIGHT"

"When they saw the star, they were filled with joy." —Matthew 2:10

For over one hundred years, **The Christmas Fund** has provided direct financial assistance to the healers in our lives: retired and active UCC ministers, church workers, and their families. Thanks to your generosity, last year The Christmas Fund provided over \$1.7 million in pension and health benefits, emergency grants, and thank-you checks to retired clergy

Please consider donating to this Special Mission Offering to ensure more healers receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need. ERUCC will receive The Christmas Fund offering on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21, on Christmas Eve, and anytime online by scanning the QR code or going to <https://tinyurl.com/CF25give>.



ALL-CHURCH CHRISTMAS HAM DINNER

Sunday, December 21

Community Room, 5:00 – 7:00 PM

Come share a joyful all-church ham dinner as we gather to celebrate connection and community. We'll have children's activities set up at the side of the room, along with a simple art project for adults—and together we'll brighten the space with paper Advent lanterns!

Please sign up to bring a side dish, and consider bringing 1–2 canned goods, shelf-stable items, or toiletries to help stock the Frederick Community Fridge.

As one big and generous family of God, let's make this a table of welcome. Think about inviting a friend or neighbor, or reaching out to someone from church you haven't seen in a while—let them know you'll be there, or offer them a ride so they can join us too.

Side up to attend and/or contribute food: <https://tinyurl.com/hamER1221>



ALL ARE INVITED

Christmas Ham Dinner

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21
5:00 - 7:00 PM | Community Room

The theme for Sunday, December 21 worship invites us to be together in connection rather than live in isolation. It is certainly easy to feel isolated at the holidays and especially at a time when it is important to continue to share:

**"Fear not!
We don't go through this alone!"**

Sign up to Attend and Contribute Food



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Wednesday, December 24



The Christmas season can be filled with saccharine images of Mary, meek and mild, with a quiet, sleepy Jesus in her arms, but the host of angels shouts to the skies, “Glory to God in the highest!” What would it look like for us to proclaim the good news loudly, with overflowing joy? In a world that weaponizes fear, where algorithms decide what gets weight, what gets circulated, and what takes up space, let us be disruptive with our joy. Let us be loud and unruly, amplifying the good news like the shepherds running into the streets of Bethlehem. In a world where good news never feels loud enough to drown out fear, let us shout with the angels, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!”

4:30 PM Children’s Service – Sanctuary

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.

CANDLELIGHT TOUR OF HISTORIC HOUSES OF WORSHIP

Friday, December 26

The beloved Candlelight Historic Houses of Worship Tour 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 Friday, December 26, 2025, from 3 - 8 PM.

ERUCC will open its main building, located at 15 West Church Street, to the public for this tour. We will be offering refreshments and our wonderful hospitality.



Interested in volunteering at this event?

Scan the QR Code or go to <https://tinyurl.com/ERcnd125>.

Questions? Contact Julie Clark, Jclarkad@yahoo.com.

THEOLOGY AMONG THE PEOPLE WITH REV. DR. REBECCA SHILLINGBURG

Tuesdays

North Room / Zoom, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Zoom: tinyurl.com/tuetap

We are reading Brian Kaylor’s book *The Bible According to Christian Nationalists: Exploiting Scripture for Political Power*. Have you heard the term Christian Nationalism and wondered exactly what was meant by that and how we as Christians should approach it and Christians in other traditions who adhere to aspects of it?

This class is slightly different than the Sunday class offered earlier, but will cover similar topics.

LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE WITH REV. JOHN SHILLINGBURG

Sunday morning, 9:15 – 10:15 AM, Zoom: bit.ly/ERSunstudy

Wednesday evening, 7:00 – 8:15 PM, Zoom: bit.ly/ERWedstudy

North Room / Zoom

Led by Rev. John Shillingburg, this is an ongoing class, with new members welcome at any time. No prior Bible knowledge is required. The class explores scripture in its original context, considering who wrote it and how it has been interpreted over time. This multi-faceted approach leads to deep learning and engaging conversations.

**The Sunday class resumes January 4, 2026. The Wednesday class meets for a final session on December 17, 2025, resuming on January 7, 2026.*

GENTLE YOGA

Tuesdays (*Final class in 2025 on December 16, classes resume January 6*)

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.

WEDNESDAY PRAYERS

Wednesdays

Sanctuary, 4:00 – 4:30 PM

On Wednesday afternoons, you are invited to enter the church (doors open at 3:45 PM) and proceed to the front of the sanctuary in silence. We will each pray silently in our own personal traditions. We begin promptly at 4:00 PM and end at 4:30 PM. What you can expect: substance for your everyday journey. Led by Rev. Richard Leslie.

NEW YEAR'S DAY HIKE

January 1, 10:00 AM

Families are invited to take a New Year's Day walk, meeting Pastor Kirstin and her family for a 1–2 hour hike. The timing and location will be determined closer to the date, when we can better predict the weather. Bring clothes to layer for the weather, a water bottle, and a snack if desired. Let's welcome the new year with movement and community connections!

Let us know if you are interested so we can keep you updated: <https://tinyurl.com/4up9hmfa>

LET'S TALK: PRACTICING PEACE IN TIMES OF WAR

Sundays, January 4, 11, 18

Flora Room, 9:15 – 10:15 AM

Many of us are struggling to find our way in the face of previously unimaginable, radical changes occurring daily in our world. Join us as we explore together effective ways to respond to these assaults. The class is based on the short book, *Practicing Peace in Times of War*, by Pema Chödrön, an American Buddhist nun in the Tibetan tradition who draws on Buddhist teachings to explore the origins of aggression, hatred, and war.

The way we respond to challenges in our everyday lives can either perpetuate a culture of violence or create a new culture of compassion. She offers practical ways to break the cycles of violence and aggression. We will also explore the parallels between these teachings and those of Jesus and the Bible as a whole.

It is not necessary to read the book to participate. New members are welcome at any session.

FRANKLINTON CENTER WORK TRIP

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

January 17–19

Join us for ERUCC's annual work trip to the Franklinton Center at Bricks (FCAB), a historic conference, retreat, and educational center in eastern North Carolina dedicated to justice advocacy, leadership development, and community empowerment. Over MLK Jr. weekend (2026), we'll partner with this remarkable UCC-related ministry whose roots include the Franklinton Christian College (1871) and the Congregationalist Bricks School (1895), both founded to expand education and opportunity for formerly enslaved and marginalized communities. Today, FCAB continues that legacy as a hub for transformation and justice work.

ERUCC has the longest continuous volunteer partnership with Franklinton Center at Bricks. Each year, our group helps upgrade and maintain facilities so FCAB can more effectively serve its community with education, justice programming, and essential services. To continue our partnership, we especially need the commitment of adults with a variety of skills. Please pray about participating with us.

The cost is **\$90 per person**, which includes housing and meals. (Confirmands participate at no cost—it's part of the Confirmation program.)

Budgeted mission funds and additional donations from the congregation help subsidize the trip.

Make a gift in support of this work trip today: <https://ppay.co/kkaBnvIos-A>

Participants should attend our prep meeting on Sunday, January 11, at 9:15 AM in the Community Room.



If you're ready for meaningful service, deep learning, and great community, we'd love for you to join us. **Register and pay here:** <https://tinyurl.com/ER26fcab>

Questions? Contact Pastor Kirstin, ksrhoads@erucc.org

SOUPER SEND-OFF

Sunday, January 11

On Dr. Morgan's last Sunday at ERUCC, we would like to acknowledge his time with us with a soup lunch during Fellowship. We are expecting a crowd in his honor and for the Name Study Group presentation that is also scheduled during Fellowship. Please contact Ave Barr (avebarr9200@gmail.com) or Susan Kulp (smkulp@earthlink.net) if you would be willing to make a crockpot of soup or bring bread/crackers for the event.

CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS REVIEW SESSIONS

A Constitution and Bylaws Study Group has completed a draft of a revised document, and we invite the entire congregation to be part of the next step. Three upcoming sessions will offer an opportunity to hear more about the recommended revisions, ask questions, and share your feedback as we discern together the best path forward for ERUCC's governance and ministry.

Review the current draft: <https://tinyurl.com/ymaaemst>

Please join us at one of the following sessions in 2026:

- **Tuesday, January 6 at 6:30 PM on Zoom**
 - Pre-registration required: <https://tinyurl.com/ERcb0106>
- **Sunday, January 25 in the North Room at approximately 12:00 PM**
- **Sunday, February 8 in the North Room at approximately 12:00 PM**

Your participation is essential as we shape structures that support our mission, our values, and our shared future. We hope to see you there!

Ways to Give to Evangelical Reformed UCC

WEBSITE

www.erucc.org/give



one time or recurring gifts

MOBILE



Scan to give from your mobile device

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

Children & Youth Activities, Events, and Announcements

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH

Sundays, 9:15 – 10:15 AM*

**December 14 is the last day of Sunday School in 2025. We hope you participate in the Intergenerational Christmas Pageant on December 21 during the Sunday School hour. Classes will resume in January 2026.*

Join us for a joyful hour of learning, connection, and faith formation with classes for all ages.

Children in Pre-K; K – Grade 2; and Grades 3 – 5: please check-in at the reception desk in the Kieffer Lobby (main building).

Music & Movement takes place from 10:00 – 10:15 AM. Students who wish to participate in Music & Movement will transition under the direction of their teachers to the Liz Coffey Room at 10:00 AM.

Pickup: All families must check out children with leaders in their classrooms at 10:00 AM OR in the Liz Coffey Room at 10:20 AM if staying for Music & Movement.

Youth in Middle School/Confirmation or High School should enter Trinity Chapel through the side door, located behind the iron gate on the left side of the building. Please check in at the self-service kiosk before proceeding to your classroom. Always cross the street at the crosswalk.

Dismissal: Youth, escorted by a teacher, will return as a group to the main building at 10:15 AM.

JUNIOR CHURCH

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

**December 14 is the last day of Junior Church in 2025. We hope you enjoy the Service of Lessons and Carols during worship at 10:30 AM on Sunday, December 21. Junior Church resumes on Sunday, January 11, 2026.*

Children in K – Grade 5 are invited to Junior Church most Sundays during the school year. Children begin worship at 10:30 AM in the sanctuary with their families and, after the Thought for the Day, are dismissed for creative, well-supervised spiritual formation activities. On the first Sunday of each month, children remain in worship to participate in worship and receive communion with their families.

ADVENT MISSION PROJECT FOR K–5 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Collection: November 30 – December 14

This Advent season, our K–5th grade Sunday School classes are putting compassion into action with a special mission project! We're teaming up to stock the Frederick Community Fridge and Pantry, a simple but powerful way our children can help care for our neighbors. Children are invited to bring non-perishable food items or hygiene products to their classrooms. We'll be collecting donations through December 14, when our classes will make a special trip out to our parking lot to place their gifts directly into the Community Fridge. It's a hands-on moment of generosity and learning that embodies the heart of Advent.

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	Let's Talk , Flora Room
9:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Nursery Care
9:15 – 10:00 AM	Children's Sunday School <i>Pre-K, Nursery</i> <i>K – 2nd Grade, Liz Coffey Room</i> <i>3rd – 5th Grade, Thomas Room</i>
9:15 – 10:15 AM	Youth Sunday School <i>Middle School Youth/Confirmation, Trinity Chapel</i> <i>High School Youth, Trinity Chapel</i>
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>
11:30 AM	Fellowship , Downtown Community Room

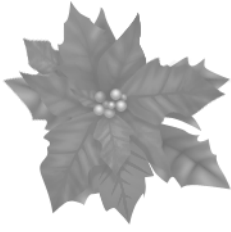
Stay Informed



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.

Poinsettias



We will be ordering poinsettias from Frederick High School this year. All funds will benefit the horticultural program and Frederick High FFA Chapter. Each plant will have 4-6 blooms and will cost \$10. Plants will be placed on the chancel in the Sanctuary.

Order by December 14!

Complete the form and return it with payment to the church office, offering plate, or pay online at bit.ly/eruccflowers by December 14.



Scan to
Pay Online

Plants may be picked up after the Christmas Eve Services; however, we would appreciate having some left for the Candlelight Historic Houses of Worship Tour on December 26.

Donor Name(s): _____

I would like to place _____ poinsettias in the church for Christmas.

I/we have **enclosed** a payment of \$_____ (\$10 per plant).

I/we made an **online** payment of \$_____ (\$10 per plant).

If you wish for your poinsettias to be listed in memory of, in honor of, or placed by the donor, please indicate which and PRINT the names below.

In memory of:

In honor of:

Placed by:

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 14, 2025

Luke 1:46b-55

Heartbeat of Justice

Mary, a teen engaged to Joseph, received the startling news that God had chosen her to birth hope into a bleak world. Quite an honor of the divine kind, yet quite a dishonor of the humankind. This pregnancy would ignite gossipy whispers and many a raised eyebrows among the villagers. Still, Mary said “yes,” relaying the brave and life-changing words to her angelic messenger: *Let it be according to God’s will.*

While young and innocent, Mary knew what even the most learned and worldly person failed to grasp: The Mighty One can and will do great things for all who have been told that they are not good enough to garner any worthy attention.

The holy mother-to-be also knew there was something greater in the works than her own blissful domesticity with Joseph. Her “yes” would bless generations to come. How often do we realize that our “yes” to God creates a ripple of blessings? When will we ever truly allow God’s plan to override our best laid plans for tomorrow? Can we give up our dreams so easily and so eagerly for that of God’s vision for us?

So in awe to be cast in the salvation story, Mary begins singing of God’s power that sends the rich away empty. While the scholarly name of Mary’s song is “The Magnificat” it could easily be called “The Heartbeat of Justice,” for each word hits the right note of how God will dismantle the systems of oppression.

Mary had her season of saying “yes” to God. Now it is our turn, for we are being invited to play a pivotal role in the unfolding saga of salvation. It is our time to sing “The Heartbeat of Justice,” making clear every note of God’s care for all who have been forgotten.

But what exactly would our “yes” to God require? According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, every “yes” to God is accompanied with a “no.” As the German pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident during World War II once reflected, “Our ‘yes’ to God requires our ‘no’ to all injustice, to all evil, to all lies, to all oppression and violation of the weak and poor.”

“The Heartbeat of Justice” is playing. Who will sing it out loud?

Mighty and loving God, as Christmas songs fill the air with promises of jingling bells and flying reindeer, may our ears be attuned to the true song of Christmas. May we hear the lyrics of a justice seeking Love that sets prisoners free and lifts those kicked to the gutter. May we hear, may we sing, and may we find ourselves whispering our “yes” to You. May Your will be done in our lives. 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.)



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