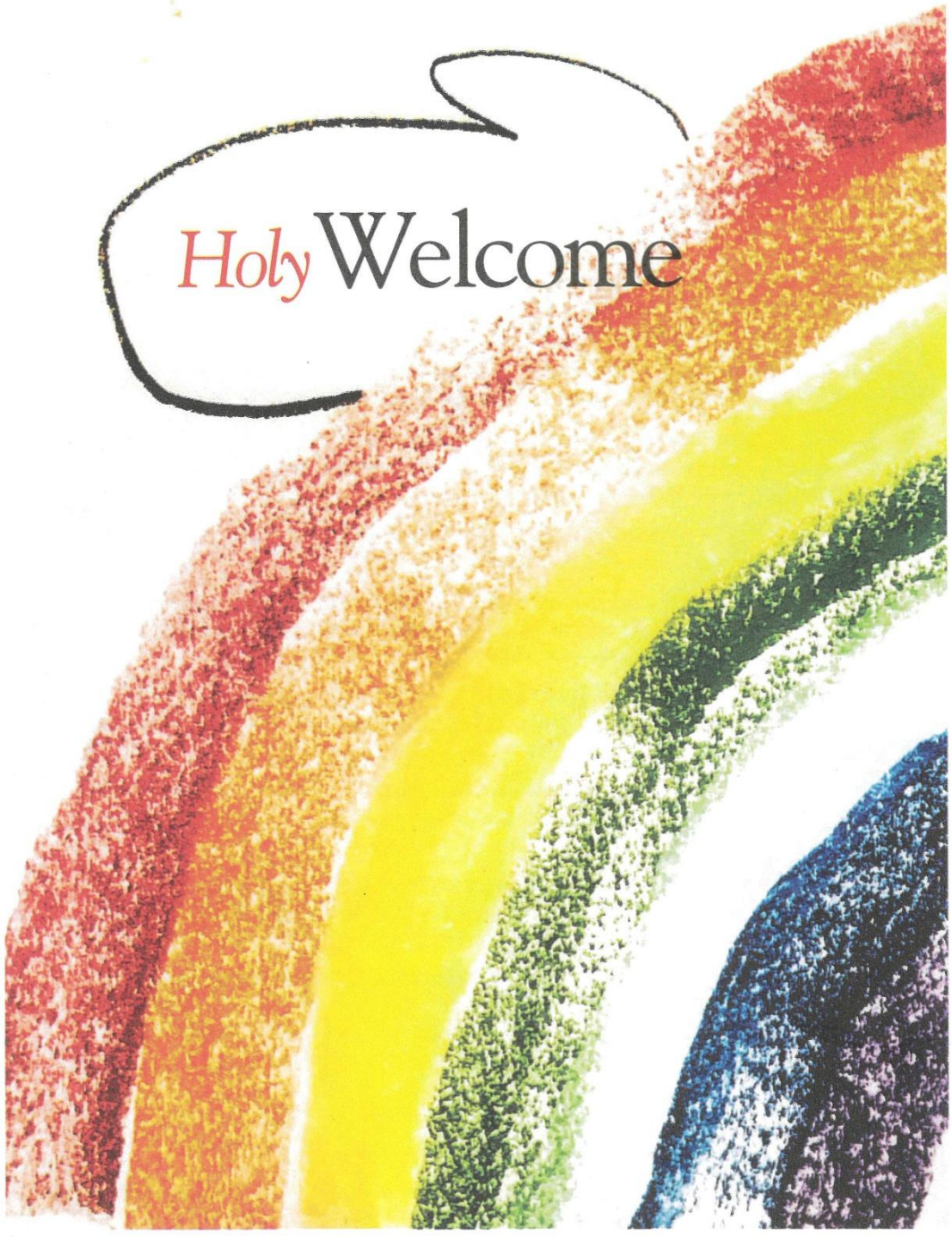
Holy Welcome



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 –

June 28, 2026 | Fifth Sunday after Pentecost | 10:30 AM

Open and Affirming Sunday

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. Dr. Rebecca Shillingburg

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

PRELUDE

***CONGREGATION CENTERING PRAYER** Dan Smith

As we walk together through this time of transition, we give thanks for the faith that has shaped us and look with hope toward what lies ahead.
We covenant to proclaim and embody God's love and justice for all people, serving our neighbors both near and far.
Through faithful living and active participation in our congregation, we commit to following in the way of Jesus to build a community of extravagant welcome and inclusivity for all people.
May we continue to reflect God's light through our love and hope in all that we do.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE CENTERING CANDLE

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

In the image of God, you created everything and called it good!
In abundant diversity, your likeness is found in us.
We reject all messages that belittle or degrade any among us.
And so in faithfulness to God and one another we proclaim:
Sacred are our bodies of every size and ability.

Blessed are our sexualities, drawing us towards love of many kinds.
Beloved is every gender, revealing you in different ways.

To our skin, beautiful in every shade, we say hallelujah!
Praise God, our Creator, who blesses us with this world,
And blesses us with these bodies, and our fellow creatures, all created good, very good!

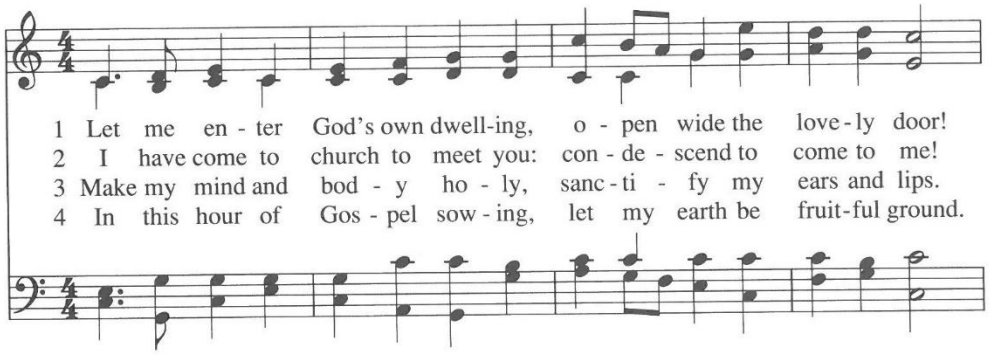
***OPENING PRAYER**

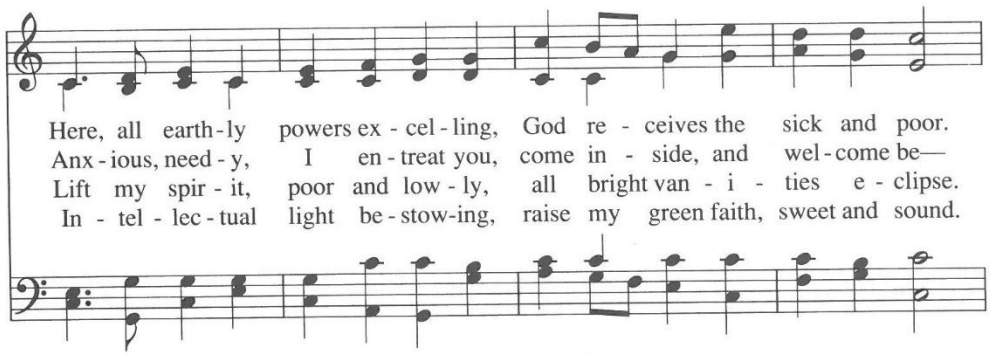
God of tenderness – of soft, holy comfort – breathe life into us. Empower us to embody your relentless love and grace. Help us mirror to one another that you are a God who makes no mistakes. Let these prayers reverberate far and wide.

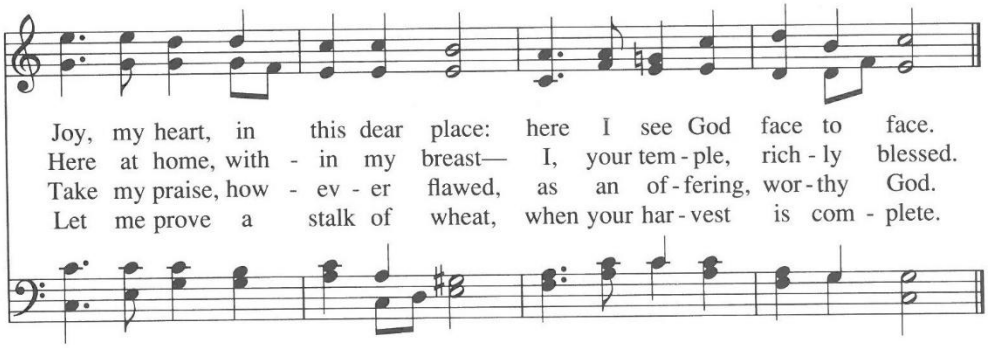
May we continue to empower one another to be the Church that Christ nourished over meals – a table, our stories, our resilience, and our deep belief in love that transcends all things through a Creator who knows our inner being and calls us in to bloom new life again and again, together. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling #67







5 Re-in-force me, weak and fail-ing,
mak-ing sure your pre-cious word—
(Thieves and e-vil un-a-vail-ing)—
lives with-in my heart se-cured.
Shin-ing word, my star-ry guide,
plant-ed for me, deep in-side.

6 Let me hear when you com-mand me,
let me leap to do your will.
When I wan-der, rep-ri-mand me,
com-fort me when I lie ill.
In the hour of si-lent dread,
feed me with your heaven-ly bread.

*CALL TO TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

God of the Covenant, in you, we have new life. In you, we have a faithful companion. Yet, difficult moments confront us with the limits of our trust in you. We struggle to release control so that we might participate fully in your plan without fear, hesitation, or resistance. Help us, O God, to be your faithful servants who trust you even through the tests and trials of life. May we know the assurance and peace of your eternal love. Amen.

***PRAYER FOR GRACE**

When we seek security in worldly things,
we betray our lack of confidence in your promises.
When we seek assurance in the eyes of others,
we betray our inability to see you in our daily lives.
When we try to "help" your kingdom come a little faster,
we betray our unwillingness to surrender to your wisdom and your timing.
O God, forgive us when we turn from you and your ways.
Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE**

The Holy One loves you and has made you participants in an everlasting covenant. God will not abandon you in despair or deprivation. Rather, the one who creates also sustains. Receive the grace of God.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY Sophia Carliss

Children, youth, and all who wish to join them are invited to come forward for a special message. Children entering Kindergarten through 5th grade are invited to join us for a fun, camp-themed Summer Sunday School during Junior Church time. We will meet in the Thomas Room

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.

HYMN

Jesus – The Very Thought to Me #507

Jesus, the very thought of thee
with sweetness fills the breast;
but sweeter far thy face to see,
and in thy presence rest.

O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,

to those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah, this
nor tongue nor pen can show;
the love of Jesus, what it is,
none but his loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be thou,
as thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now,
and through eternity.

THE SCRIPTURE Betsy Selby

Psalm 49:5-13	OT Page Number 519
Philippians 2:1-8	OT Page Number 197
Luke 12:15-21	NT Page Number 74

Reader: May God bless the reading of this word.
All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON The Rev. John Shillingburg

MORNING PRAYER

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

The Holy One invites us into our generous life. Let us bring our resources together in order to support the ministry of this and the wider church and meet the needs of our community and world. Our giving testifies to the goodness, graciousness, and abundance of God. Let us recognize and respond to the cries of our neighbors and siblings with our resources offered in love.

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

Fairest Lord Jesus - D. Hakes

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Generous God, may the gifts we bring provide for our community and neighbors and show your love for all people.
Bless our time, talent, and treasure for your glory and your kin-dom. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN**

Take My Life, God, Let It Be #448

Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

***BENEDICTION**

Be confident that the Holy One will provide
For the promise of God is trustworthy
And the presence of God is enduring
Therefore, show up in the world
With boldness and clarity
That justice and righteousness will prevail
In the name of Holy Love and Everlasting Peace
May it be so for you and through you.

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

POSTLUDE

Worship Notes: Living Pride OUT LOUD Worship Resources, www.ucc.org/loveislouder; *It Shall Be Provided: Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Year A* was written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.

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

The flowers on the altar this morning are placed in celebration of the 30th wedding anniversary of Angela and Jim Brittain.

The yellow rose is presented by Felecia Bishop in thanks of the Ray, Bishop, Nicholoson, Cuffee, and Jones families for their continued military service since the Civil War to the present time.

Attendance Last Sunday: 19 at 8:30 AM, 169 at 10:30 AM, and 123 online.

Watch Worship Live

Watch worship live every Sunday at 10:30 AM or on-demand:
https://erucc.org/visit/sunday-live-stream

Serving Today: June 28		**Serving Next Week: July 5**
Deacons:	Angela and Jim Brittain	Mark Ulrich, Quynn Adkins
Elder:	Ave Barr	Ave Barr
Scripture Reader:	Betsy Selby	Stephanie Wiant
Acolyte:	Abby Spear	Laurel Nguyen-Powell
Greeters:	Sue Pinner, Felecia Bishop	Felecia Bishop
	Cliff Barr	Paul McGinley, Cliff Barr
Welcome Table:	Elizabeth Slade, Emily Sexton	Julie Clark
Audio/Visual:	Jeff Schaeberle, Jeffrey Baker	Ethan Cline, Jeff Schaeberle
	David Howard	
Nursery:		
Fellowship:	Linda Coyle, Shelley Weakly	Julie Clark, Joe Adkins
	Eric Weakly, Tommie Bradshaw	Quynn Adkins, Kyle Miller
	Colleen Baldree, Chuck Baldree	Pat Dorsz, Zaydan York

Next Sunday: July 5 – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The kingdom of heaven is like…weeds in our garden? Surely not!

The Rev. Dr. Rebecca Shillingburg will be preaching and leading worship. The Senior Choir will sing. We will share in Holy Communion at the chancel rail this morning.

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.

Friends & family of Catherine Crome
Rodney Martin
Donna Logee
Daniel Schaffer (neighbor of Kathleen & Niel Jefferson)
Tom Dorsz
Paul McGinley
Sue Whiting (sister of Nan McNamara)
Mike Simms
Adam Huegel
Carroll Smith (friend of Sandra Trout)
Tom Ford
Ingrid Jacobsen
Della Willmann (Shelley Weakly's mother)
Charlie Woodward
John Stush
Izzie Sims (friend of Molly Black)
Debbie Jennings *(friend of Kathleen Jefferson)*
Robert Debonis (uncle of Sophia Carliss)
Sandy Maples (sister-in-law of Allen and Joan Maples)
Betsy Fisher
Barbara Heverley
Todd Starr (nephew of Mary Staley)
Sharon DiDonato (aunt of Darryl Glick, friend of Mark Ulrich)
Ginny Peters
Karen Stitely
Donna Baumgardner Smith (friend of Sandra Trout)
Bill Cassell (brother of Ave Barr)
The Murray/Lennox/Cable Family
Sandra Trout
Family of Charlie Van Eman (son of friends of Kathleen and Niel Jefferson)
Mary Staley
Pat Condo
Wells Condo
Tom Frazier
Pauline Marendt
Kayla Merry (niece of Kim Sexton)
Carol Spera (mother of Mark Ulrich)
Emogene Wyand
Bob Pinner
Jim Baldree (father of Chuck Baldree)
Lee Thomas
Marcia Eisenstein
Derek C. Hupp (grandson of Beanie & Gaylon Cornell)
Wayne Kolb (friend of Stefan and Judi Mach and Tony and Linda LaFianza)
Jeannette Johnson
Jackie Keyser (sister-in-law of Betsy and Phil Selby)
Marcy Channell (daughter of Jo Ann Fritz)
Paige Coffey
Fran Wenner
Bonnie Devilbiss
Tina Prescott (daughter-in-law of Barbara & Bill Prescott)
Heleen (sister of Karin Mens)
Kathy Blue Shores (friend of Jean Fish & Barb Biser)

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 communion from our pastoral team. 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

Welcome Our New Settled Senior Pastor!

We are delighted to welcome the Rev. Josh Privitt as our new settled senior pastor! On Saturday, June 20th, many of us met Pastor Josh and his wife, Nicole Warrington. Then on Sunday, we heard him preach. After the service at a special congregational meeting, ERUCC called Pastor Josh to be our next settled senior pastor.
Don't worry if you missed meeting Pastor Josh and Nicole – they will be back! Details on his start date will come soon, but we anticipate him starting sometime in August.
To hear Pastor Josh preach, click here and click on Sunday, June 21, 2026 in the menu on the right.

CHURCH OFFICES CLOSED FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY
Friday, July 3

LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE WITH REV. JOHN SHILLINGBURG

Let's Study the Bible is taking a break for the summer.

THEOLOGY AMONG THE PEOPLE WITH REV. DR. REBECCA SHILLINGBURG
Theology Among the People is taking a break. In September, we will begin with a review of the early chapters of *Genesis for Normal People* by Peter Enns and Jared Byas, making it easy for anyone to join us. If you are not a Bible scholar but want to be able to read Genesis and understand its big picture, this brief, witty book is the guide you've been waiting for. Clear summaries and thought-provoking questions provide direction for personal reflection and group discussion. Peter Enns, a Biblical Studies professor, and Jared Byas, an Old Testament professor, summarize the book's key themes and help us see Genesis as an ancient story, one with continued relevance for human experience today.

WEDNESDAY PRAYERS
Wednesdays
Sanctuary, **4:30 PM**

On Wednesday afternoons, you are invited to enter the church (doors open at 4:15 PM) and proceed to the front of the sanctuary in silence. We will pray silently in our own personal traditions. We begin promptly at 4:30 PM and end at 5:00 PM. What you can expect: substance for your everyday journey. Led by Rev. Richard Leslie.

ERUCC SUPPORTS THE UNITED WAY STUFF THE BUS CAMPAIGN
Collection Period: June 14 – August 3

ERUCC is collecting NEW school supplies for The United Way's Stuff the Bus campaign, which supports Frederick County Public Schools students in ALICE families.

Drop off school supplies in the big yellow bins in the Sanctuary and Kieffer Lobbies. The supplies most needed include markers, two-pocket folders (plastic preferred), earbuds with microphones, composition notebooks, spiral notebooks, three-ring binders, crayons, and backpacks. Complete lists of supplies are available above the yellow bins.

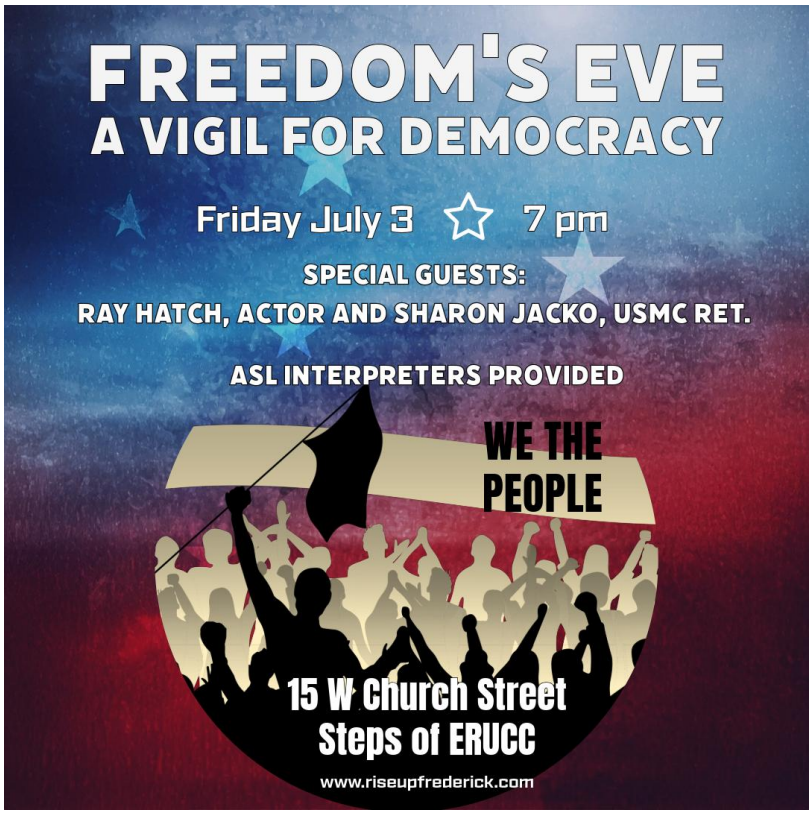
WEARING NAMETAGS

Please be sure to wear your nametags so that we have that gracious reminder as we get to know people who are new to us. If you do not have a nametag and want one, please request it at either the Welcome desk or Welcome table.

AWESOME CLOTHESLINE SHARING

Our Eastertide theme has been "Pursuing Awe". Tom Dorsz has wowed us with his photographs, still on display in the music suite hallway. We have explored the deeps of the ocean and the shells on the beach with an awesome sealife display in the lobby outside the Community Room.

Now, it is your turn to share what inspires awe (or awww) for you by posting photos, drawings, or easily hung 2D pieces on a lighted clothesline on the blue wall at the head of the stairs from the Kieffer Lobby. Starting this week, please show us the things that move you, amaze you, inspire you, or bring you overwhelming joy and gratitude. No explanation is needed other than the image itself, but please put enough information on the back of the piece that we can return it to you when the display is taken down. This will be an ongoing installation project of the Worship Design Team.



ON FREEDOM'S EVE: A VIGIL FOR DEMOCRACY

Rise Up Frederick will gather on the eve of the day we celebrate our country's independence from the tyranny of kings to hear the words of the Declaration of Independence. Let those words, written 250 years ago, give us renewed energy as we continue to work for liberty and justice for all.
They'll be collecting items for our neighbors with the Western Maryland Immigrant Rights Collective (WMD-IRC) & Resources for Immigrant Support and Empowerment (RISE) Coalition of Western Maryland. For donation list, visit https://tinyurl.com/MutualAidDonations or scan this QR code

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GET OUT THE VOTE POSTCARDING

The Mission, Evangelization, and Social Justice committee will once again be writing postcards encouraging voters to check their registrations so they are ready to have their votes counted this fall.

We are working with the Center for Common Ground on this effort. Volunteers are needed to hand-write messages to voters in North Carolina, Georgia and Virginia. If you are interested in helping, please email Kate McDermott at katemmcdermott@msn.com or Sophia Carliss at scarliss07@gmail.com with the subject line POSTCARDS.

CONGREGATIONAL DIRECTORY

With MANY thanks to Barb Barry and the Welcoming Hands team for accomplishing this momentous task, our new congregational directory is ready! Visit the ERUCC Keiffer Lobby on Sundays to pick up a copy and check your name off the list.

For those Members and Attenders who participate with ERUCC primarily or exclusively through Zoom, please reach out to Barbara Barry at ebbarry1@gmail.com or text (240) 422-7888 to make arrangements for delivery. We want to get your directory to you promptly.

Remember that this is a paper copy only and will not be produced virtually.

INVITATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN GERMANY HOSPITALITY

EAST GERMANY GROUP IS COMING THIS SUMMER
July 5-16, Confirmed Dates!

Save these dates to gather as a church family with our guests as we participate in hospitality together.
-July 6, Dinner and Service Project, Project late afternoon time TBD, Dinner at 6:00pm
-July 12, We welcome our guests in worship and extended visiting at fellowship
-July 14, Goodbye dinner at ERUCC, 6:30pm

Donations
As we prepare to host this experience for both our youth and the German youth, we are asking for your donations.

Use this link to sign up for and provide items for "**Blessings in a Backpack**." We will be packing at least 100 backpacks to provide weekend food for Frederick families.
You will need to bring these food donations to church on **Sunday, July 5 or Monday, July 6** for our 4pm packing service project in the community room, just before the church dinner. www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094DAFA72DA3FBC34-64523261-blessings

Use this link to provide food for our opening dinner (July 6) youth, host family cookout (July 7), and closing dinner (July 14).
www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094DAFA72DA3FBC34-64523302-germany

Questions? Kelly Hueting will be in charge of July 6, Barb Barry and Jen Powell will be in charge of July 7, and Shelley Weakly will be in charge of July 14.

Monetary donations can be made to support this ministry by giving to YOUTH ACTIVITIES and indicating GERMANY. Pastor Kirstin will then sort any food purchases accordingly.

Youth parents: please sign up here for which activities your child(ren) will attend with our German youth. https://tinyurl.com/GermanPartnerActivitiesSignUp

Children & Youth Activities, Events, and Announcements

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH AND JUNIOR CHURCH

During the summer, our 9:15 AM Sunday School and Junior Church classes and teachers take a break. We welcome children to spend time during the service in the Children's Worship Area, where there are additional craft supplies, worship streamers, and fidgets. In addition, there are books and coloring supplies in the back corner of the sanctuary that can also be used in your seats.

We welcome our children to make joyful noises during worship and believe that they grow from participating in the service, by listening to things as they sit with us, and by learning the patterns of worship, including prayers and hymns, as well as participating in sacred moments like baptisms, communion, and other worship rituals and traditions.

SUMMER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

Children entering Kindergarten through 5th grade are invited to join us for a fun, camp-themed Summer Sunday School! Offered during Junior Church time at the 10:30 AM worship service, we will meet in the Thomas Room on the following four Sundays: **June 28, July 12, July 26, and August 9**. We will have a fun-filled end of summer camping themed event on August 16th in the evening. We will share more details on this event as the date approaches.

Each week stands alone with a unique outdoor-themed Bible lesson paired with an exciting campfire-style game or creative craft. Because every session is a brand-new adventure, children can attend as many or as few as your summer schedule allows. Come unplug, get active, and explore how outdoor adventures bring us closer to God!

CATOCTIN ASSOCIATION OVERNIGHT LOCK-IN

Friday, July 24, 6:00 PM – Saturday, July 25, Noon
Grace United Church of Christ
25 E 2nd St, Frederick

All youth going into 7-12th grades are invited! There is zero cost, and registration includes food and activities all night long, as well as a 2-hour service project on Saturday. There will be time to rest for those who don't wish to go all night. Planning and Leadership by Pastor Kirstin, Pastor Chance Martinez and Pastor Katie Pennick. Register at:
https://erucc.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/101/responses/new

Ministers, Staff, & Lay Leaders of Evangelical Reformed UCC

MINISTERS AND STAFF

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

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Alison E. Shafer ~ *Director of Music*

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

Ann Watkins ~ *Office Administrator* ~ awatkins@erucc.org

Ashley Murphy ~ *Nursery Attendant*

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

The Rev. Fred Wenner ~ *Pastor Emeritus*

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Robin L. Brady-Slifer ~ *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* | Keith Stickley ~ *Property Chair*

Kate Fromknecht ~ *Stewardship/Generosity Chair* | Holly Davis ~ *Christian Education Chair*

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

Darryl Glick ~ *Personnel Chair*

ELDERS

Ave Barr | Robin L. Brady-Slifer | Matt Hueting | Jeanellen Kallevang | Susan Kulp | Eric Weakly

DEACONS

Quynn Adkins | Tommie Bradshaw | Robin A. Brady-Slifer | Robin L. Brady-Slifer

Angela Brittain | Jim Brittain | Kyle Miller | Mark Ulrich

SETTLED PASTOR SEARCH AND CALL COMMITTEE

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

Terry Logee | Jen Powell | Bud Rossig | Eliza Stitely

Sunday Morning Schedule

subject to change

8:30 – 9:15 AM	**Early Worship**, Sanctuary
9:00 AM	**Coffee and Conversation,** Kieffer Lobby
9:15 AM – 12:00 PM	**Nursery Care**
10:30 – 11:30 AM	**Worship**, Sanctuary and Online at www.erucc.org
11:30 AM	**Fellowship,** Downtown Community Room

Stay Informed

Subscribe to receive e-news from ERUCC at 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.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 28, 2026 Matthew 10:40-42

Holy Welcome

When I first began living on my own, my mother would ask if my kitchen was stocked with treats for those who dropped by unexpectedly. Was there coffee? Tea? Cream and sugar for the coffee and tea? Cookies?

My answer was always "no," to which she would sigh in exacerbation, "But you have to have cookies."

I was living on an assistant editor's salary in Manhattan. The thought of spending money on "extravagant" extras for those phantom guests was ludicrous to me. Even more ludicrous was my mother thinking that any stash of cookies would survive uneaten in my cupboards.

Perhaps it was that missing Martha Stewart gene in me that kept my cupboards empty of treats for others. Perhaps it was my mom's deep-seated generational belief that good manners meant feeding someone at the spur of the moment.

Whatever it was, I do not deny that hospitality is important — and biblical. For in the breaking of the bread, humanity's differences give way to a truth that connects us all: We are hungering for belonging, which begins with a welcome.

Jesus once told his friends that whoever welcomes them, welcomes him. And so, welcoming is a powerful, holy act that we often fail to see as such.

Think about a time when your schedule was interrupted by an unexpected visitor. You probably felt annoyed. But afterward you realized how that encounter was a blessing, turning your day — and attitude — around.

Now think back to a time when you called on someone without notice and were given a chilly hello and swift good-bye. How did that make you feel?

The reality is that we are all standing on proverbial welcome mats praying that the door before us opens to a place of acceptance — a place that tells us in the welcoming, that we are not only seen, but that our existence matters.

Such a welcome doesn't have to be extravagant. It doesn't even require having coffee and cookies on hand in the pantry. (Sorry, mom.) A simple cup of cold water to one of God's little ones is meaningful, Jesus points out.

St. David of Wales had a motto in life and that was "do the little things." On his deathbed in the 6th century, he reminded his monks to keep offering small acts of love, for those are the acts make the world a better place.

Our holy welcomes are acts of love we can show others. And the good news is that our spiritual pantries are already stocked. We have the presence of ourselves to give both stranger and friend.

Loving God, at the very start of creation You saw that humans should not be alone. We were meant to be there for one another, to slow down and show up for the one who is needing to know they are not invisible. May today we find those holy moments to connect with our siblings. 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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