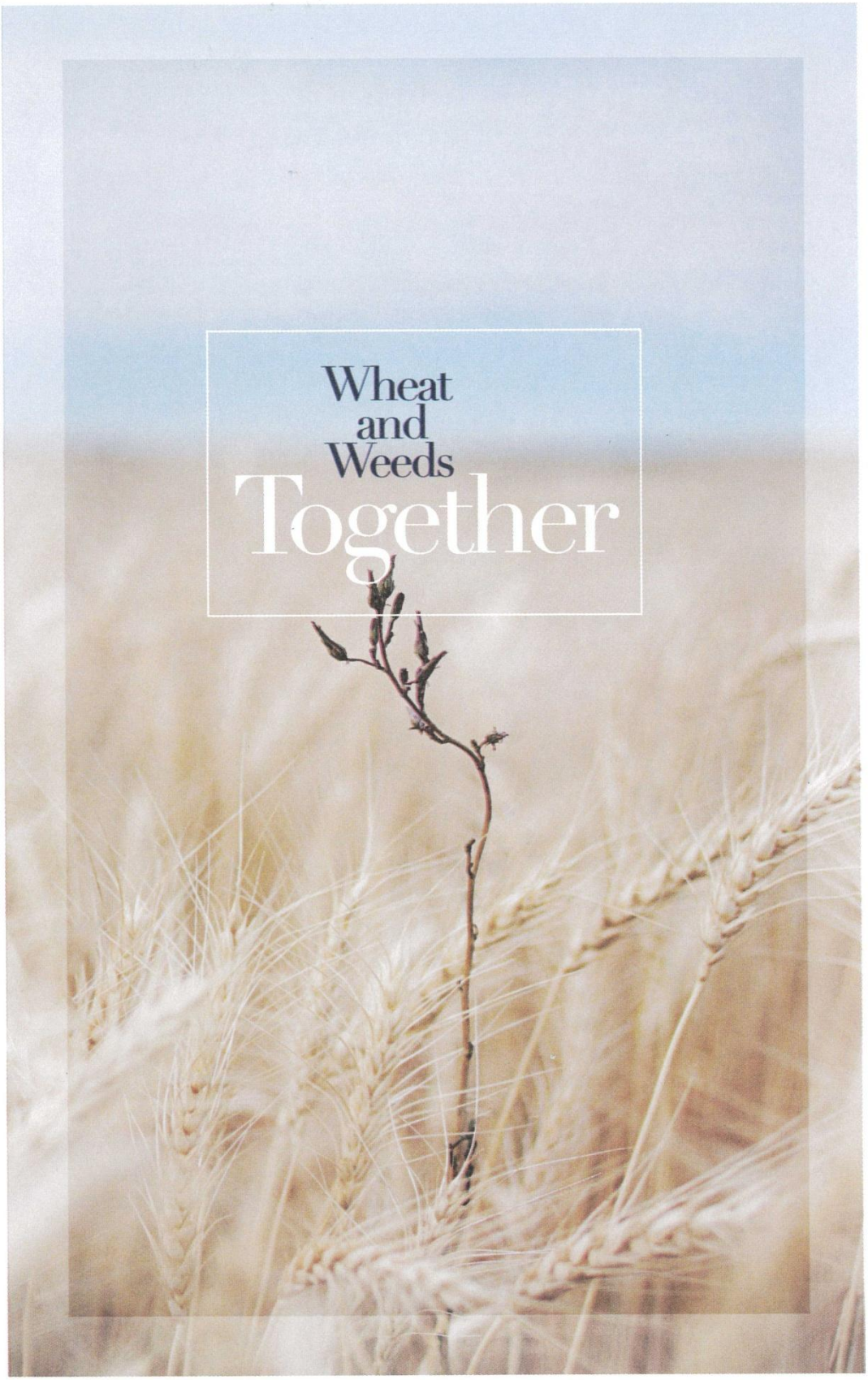
Wheat
and
Weeds
Together

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 –

July 19, 2026 | Eighth Sunday after Pentecost | 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**

PRELUDE

***CONGREGATION CENTERING PRAYER** Kathleen and Niel Jefferson

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**

We come to worship this day, knowing deeply what it means to struggle.
We remember times in our lives when we've felt hopeless, yearning for someone to care for us.
In this divided climate that might tempt us to ignore the neighbors in our midst, we need only tap into our own humanity.
Because we know what it means to struggle, we are challenged each day to show radical love to our neighbors.
Even those who aren't like us.
Especially those who aren't like us.

May our worship today help us remember times we have been helped…
…and how we can become the helpers, and the hope-bearers, in this world.

***OPENING PRAYER**

Christ, who shows us how to be in community together, thank you for gathering us into community together, onsite and online. We give you thanks for the ways we have been held in love in this community of faith. We are comforted by memories of mercy shown to us in difficult times, both by our friends in this space, and by your gracious presence in our lives. Empower us to be Good Samaritans in our own ways. Embolden us to seek out those who are hopeless and in need, not out of pity, but out of a deep understanding of difficulty in our own lives. Guided by your example. may we lead with radical love and brave compassion. Amen.

***OPENING HYMN**

Teach Me, O Lord, Your Holy Way #465

Teach me, O Lord, your holy way,
And give me an obedient mind;
That in your service I may find
My heart's delight from day to day.

Help me, O Savior, here to trace
The sacred footsteps you have trod;
And fully trusting in my God,
To grow in goodness, truth, and grace.

Guard me, O Christ, that I may ne'er
Forsake the right, or do the wrong:
Against temptation make me strong,
And keep me in your sheltering care.

Bless me in every task I face,
Begun, continued, done for you;
Fulfill your will in all I do,
And grant me your abundant grace.

***CALL TO TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**

The world teaches us many ways to love,
But all are based on selfish desires and needs.
God teaches us how to love: completely, uniquely, unconditionally.
Let us confess our difficulty in loving as God teaches us.

***PRAYER FOR GRACE**

God of the oppressed, we confess that it's sometimes easier to ignore those in need than it is to help them. We confess that we sometimes ask ourselves, "What will it cost us?" "What will others think?" – rather than remembering your call to care for our neighbors, whether we think they "deserve it" or not. Forgive us. Help us repent of our embarrassment at those in need, and turn instead toward empathy and compassion. We pray this in the name of your son, who teaches us how to love all of our neighbors. Amen.

***WORDS OF GRACE**

Friends, take comfort. None of us get this right all the time. We are utterly human—fallible people in need of redirection and second chances. This is the good news: we believe in a God who gives us a chance to start again. We are forgiven. May we respond to this grace with grateful hearts attuned to the pursuit of justice, mercy, and hope for all.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Children, youth, and all who wish to join them are invited to come forward for a special message. During the summer, we do not have Junior Church on a regular basis. Children are welcome to spend time in the children's worship space or using books and supplies from there and the bookshelves while sitting with their families in the pews.

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

They Asked, "Who's My Neighbor?" #541

They Asked, "Who's My Neighbor?" 541

Jan Wesson, 1981; alt.

Luke 10:29–37

Ruth Janelle (Jan) Wesson wrote this hymn for the dedication of her church in Nashville, Tennessee, and was encouraged to submit it to a Hymn Society competition. It was published at the society's national conference in 1982.

Tune: NEIGHBOR 11.8.11.8.8.
Jan Wesson, 1981

Copyright © 1982 by The Hymn Society

THE SCRIPTURE The Rev. Richard Leslie

Luke 10:25-37 NT Page Number 71

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

SERMON The Rev. Esther Ziegler

MORNING PRAYER

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

The Good Samaritan helped a needy stranger at great cost. This revolutionary act of love was life-saving. How will your gifts of time, talent, treasure, or prayer provide hope to this community, and this world?

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 Senior Choir

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me - D.M. Cherwien

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God of love, we give these gifts back to you with humility, remembering time we've needed help in our own lives. Help us use the gifts we give to love others as we have been loved. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN**

Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life #543

Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life 543

Frank Mason North, 1903; alt. *Luke 19:41; Matt. 10:42; Rev. 22:20*

5 O Sav-ior, from
the moun-tain-side,
Make haste to heal
these hearts of pain;
A-mong these rest-less
throngs a-bide,
O tread the cit-y's streets a-gain:

6 Till all shall learn
com-pas-sion's might,
And fol-low where
your feet have trod,
Till glo-rious from
your realm of light,
Shall come the cit-y of our God.

This hymn was written for the 1905 Methodist Hymnal *by Frank Mason North, a Methodist minister who was deeply committed to the role of the church in urban life. North later served as president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.*

Tune: GERMANY (GARDINER) L.M.
William Gardiner's Sacred Melodies, *1815*

*BENEDICTION

Christ reminds us that being a neighbor to others calls us to show mercy to those in need. So may you go from this place and do likewise. Comfort others because you know what it means to cry. Love others because you know what it means to be left behind. Even when it isn't easy. Especially when it isn't easy. As you go, may you go with courage, knowing that the God who created you, the Christ who guides you, and the Spirit who moves in and through you, goes forth with you. Amen.

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

POSTLUDE

Worship Notes: ***The One Who Showed Mercy*****: Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost** was written by the Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church (UCC), of Waupun, WI. and member of on the United Church of Christ's Disabilities Ministries Board. As a musician and disability justice advocate, he shares original music, liturgy, and devotionals which help congregations and communities grow in their justice work. For more information on Jacob's music and ministry, you can visit www.jacobnault.com. Call to Transformation and New Life was written by Thom Shuman, and posted on **Lectionary Liturgies.** http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca/.

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 memory of my mother, Margie Virts Stone, and our Brunner ancestors by Jennie Russell.

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

Attendance Last Sunday: 13 at 8:30 AM, 122 at 10:30 AM, and 121 online.

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

Serving Today: July 19		**Serving Next Week: July 26**
Deacons:	Kyle Miller, Tommie Bradshaw	Angela and Jim Brittain
Elder:	Eric Weakly	Jeanellen Kallevang
Scripture Reader:	Rev. Richard Leslie	Darryl Glick
Acolyte:	Emmie Rhoads	JD Bowman
Greeters:	Felecia Bishop, Sue Pinner	Cathie Duncan Paul McGinley, Rob Smith
Welcome Table:	Betsy Selby, Elizabeth Slade	Jeanellen Kallevang
Audio/Visual:	Kelly Esslinger, David Howard	Kelly Esslinger, Jeff Schaeberle David Howard
Nursery:	Emily Spear	
Fellowship:	Starr Schaeberle, Mark Ulrich Darryl Glick, Julie Chappell Betsy Selby, Angela Brittain	Susan Kulp, David Howard Robert Morris, Linda Coyle Rhea and Jake Stein

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Next Sunday: July 26 – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Rev. Freeman Palmer will be preaching and leading worship. The Senior Choir will sing.

A JUST WORLD FOR ALL

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.

Herb Bowman
Phil Berkheimer
Dan Rice (Alison Shafer's partner)
Rodney Martin
Donna Logee
Daniel Schaffer (neighbor of Kathleen & Niel Jefferson)
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
Colton Pudvah (great nephew of Kim Sexton)
Carol Spera (mother of Mark Ulrich)
Emogene and Don 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

UCC APPEAL FOR EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS IN VENEZUELA

In response to the devastating earthquakes in Venezuela, the United Church is Christ is launching an urgent appeal to support both immediate life-saving aid and long-term recovery. Working through our trusted partners on the ground, like Global Ministries and ACT Alliance, we are delivering emergency relief to displaced families, distributing food and water, and offering pastoral care to those facing profound loss and trauma.

Please consider making a gift today. Be a source of hope in the midst of crisis and help rebuild communities for the long term. Your support is essential. Together, we can provide hope, healing and love to our neighbors in Venezuela.

We also ask you and your families to pray for everyone affected. Your generosity is a witness of compassion in action. We deeply appreciate your consideration. For more information and to make a donation, please visit: https://support.ucc.org/venezuela-earthquake.

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.

GRETNA GLEN CAMPER MAIL

This month, six ERUCC children and youth will be campers at Gretna Glen, where they will have the opportunity to share in a camp experience filled with singing, Bible Discovery, worship, crafts, nature, swimming, boating, fishing, campfires, hiking, archery, sports, games, and much more. We have campers over two weeks this year.

Campers love to get mail while at camp! You're invited to send a positive note or letter (see below for dates), encouraging campers to have fun during their camp experience. Please address as follows:

Gretna Glen Camp & Retreat Center
c/o ***Camper's Name***
87 Old Mine Road
Lebanon, PA 17042

Pre-printed mailing labels are also available at the reception desk in the Kieffer Lobby. Please remember that it may take a few days for letters to arrive at camp. Gretna Glen will hold mail until the campers are there, so you can begin sending mail right away. Please do not send any kind of food, snacks, candy, or gum.

Julianne Black (Music and Drama): send by July 21
Emmie Rhoads (Music and Drama): send by July 21

Emma Baker (Gaga and Gimp Galore): send by July 21
Marley Rhoads (Gaga and Gimp Galore): send by July 21
Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads (Gaga and Gimp Galore): send by July 21

MEDITATIONS ON CONNECTION

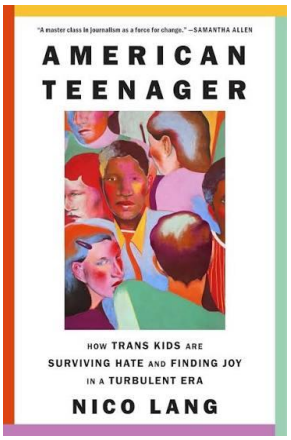
Be sure to visit the Music suite hallway in the next four weeks to view artwork by **Sophia Carliss**, local artist and member of our congregation. The paintings were all done to highlight something Sophia cares deeply about. “These pieces focus on the necessity of connection: spiritually, interpersonally, and environmentally.”

LUCAS NGUYEN-POWELL’S EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT (BSA TROOP 1023)

I am happy to announce that I am doing my Eagle Scout Project this summer. I will be building a total of five benches, two for the front portico and three for the garden space behind the church. This will help manifest the welcoming spirit of our congregation by giving people a comfortable place to sit while they are in the church's outdoor space. If you would like to learn more and support my project, I will have an information table during fellowship on 7/19 and 7/26.

PFLAG WELCOMES AUTHOR NICO LANG

Tuesday, July 21
Downtown Community Room, 6:00 – 8:00 PM



PFLAG is hosting a free author talk and Q&A with award-winning journalist and author Nico Lang. They will discuss their acclaimed book, *American Teenager: How Trans Kids Are Surviving Hate and Finding Joy in a Turbulent Era.* The book will be available for purchase and signing by the author. Email pflagfrederick@gmail for more information.

GET OUT THE VOTE POSTCARDING

Tuesday, July 28
Downtown Community Room, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

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.

Join us for an evening of community and postcard writing on **Tuesday, July 28** from 5:30-7:30 PM. Everyone is welcome! There will be a brief introduction for new postcard writers, followed by a joint effort to write. Colorful pens and light refreshments will be provided. Please contact Kate katemmcdermott@msn.com and Sophia scarliss07@gmail.com with any questions (subject line POSTCARDS). We hope to see you there!

CAC WORK CAMP OPPORTUNITY
October 18-24, 2026
Western North Carolina

High Country UCC in Western North Carolina is accepting groups of up to 20 people with the church coordinating work in the area with a variety of different community organizations to do rebuilding and recovery work based on the skills and interests of the volunteers.

Cost is $100 and includes housing at the church ($60 per person), meals, gas, and some funds for materials. Trip leaders are Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel, CAC Disaster Response Coordinator (bkdaniel@cacucc.org) and Rev. Chance Martinez-Colon, Grace UCC (pastorchance.graceucc@gmail.com). Please contact Barbara or Chance for more information and to register for this trip.

ATTENTION CHURCH KEY HOLDERS

In the event that we would need to re-key any doors to our buildings, we are compiling a comprehensive list of anyone who has keys, electronic or metal, to any doors at ERUCC. If you have keys, please stop by the Kieffer Lobby desk on Sunday mornings, contact Ann at erucc@erucc.org, or call the office. We will need your name and the numbers on the key(s). Please reach out with any questions.

Children & Youth Activities, Events, and Announcements

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 Sundays: **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://tinyurl.com/CACJulyLockIn or scan this QR code:

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

---

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.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 19, 2026 Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Wheat and Weeds Together

Wheat and weeds growing together! Yikes! This is a disaster! What are we to do?

So would have been the reaction of farmers when discovering weeds swaying in the wind alongside their cash crop of wheat.

Jesus knew the two together was not a good thing. He also knew that this was a perfect illustration to pose a more pressing question: How to deal with the good and evil mingling in the world?

And so, our Savior and Friend tells the parable about the wheat and weeds, pointing out that there's no way to prevent the "weeds" in life from coming into our fields. But be of good cheer. In God's time, the weeds will be separated and burned. Of course, Jesus is speaking of the time of judgement.

As it was with the actual weeds in the field, we must wait and let them grow, for if they are ripped out too early, precious wheat stalks might be taken as well. How many innocents have been hurt by our own exuberant weeding?

Jesus' parable makes better sense when we turn to the earlier use of the word "tares" rather the contemporary use of "weeds." Tares are referring to darnel which is a poisonous weed that looks just like wheat.

This agricultural insight gave me pause, and the more I thought on it, the more I kept coming back to how quick we are to judge others before discerning their true motives or seeing deeply into their hearts. It seems increasingly that we label others as evil, wicked, no good, etc. Yet could it be that those we are labeling too quickly really are the wheat in the field?

I'm not saying that there isn't evil mingling with good in our world. Evil does a good job mimicking good. We need to be able to call it out when identified. But in a world so raw with distrust, we also need to stop before we speak and think before we label.

We also need to be aware of the wheat and tares in our own spiritual fields. St. Catherine of Siena, for example, heard this parable as one pointing to the presence of virtue and vice in her own heart.

There is a field of wheat and weeds in all our lives. And while we try our best to nurture the good and weed out the bad, it is not always easy to discern which is which. But God knows and God will step in and sort it out. Not sure how I wanted that to sound — hopeful or ominous? I guess it all depends how you, my dear reader, heard it.

All-knowing God, You are aware of the good grain we are growing as well as the weeds of division and contempt that are thriving. We want only our best selves to flourish, so be merciful to us when You sort out our own fields. May Your grace be abundant as it is amazing. 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.)

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

BUL0407

8½" x 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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