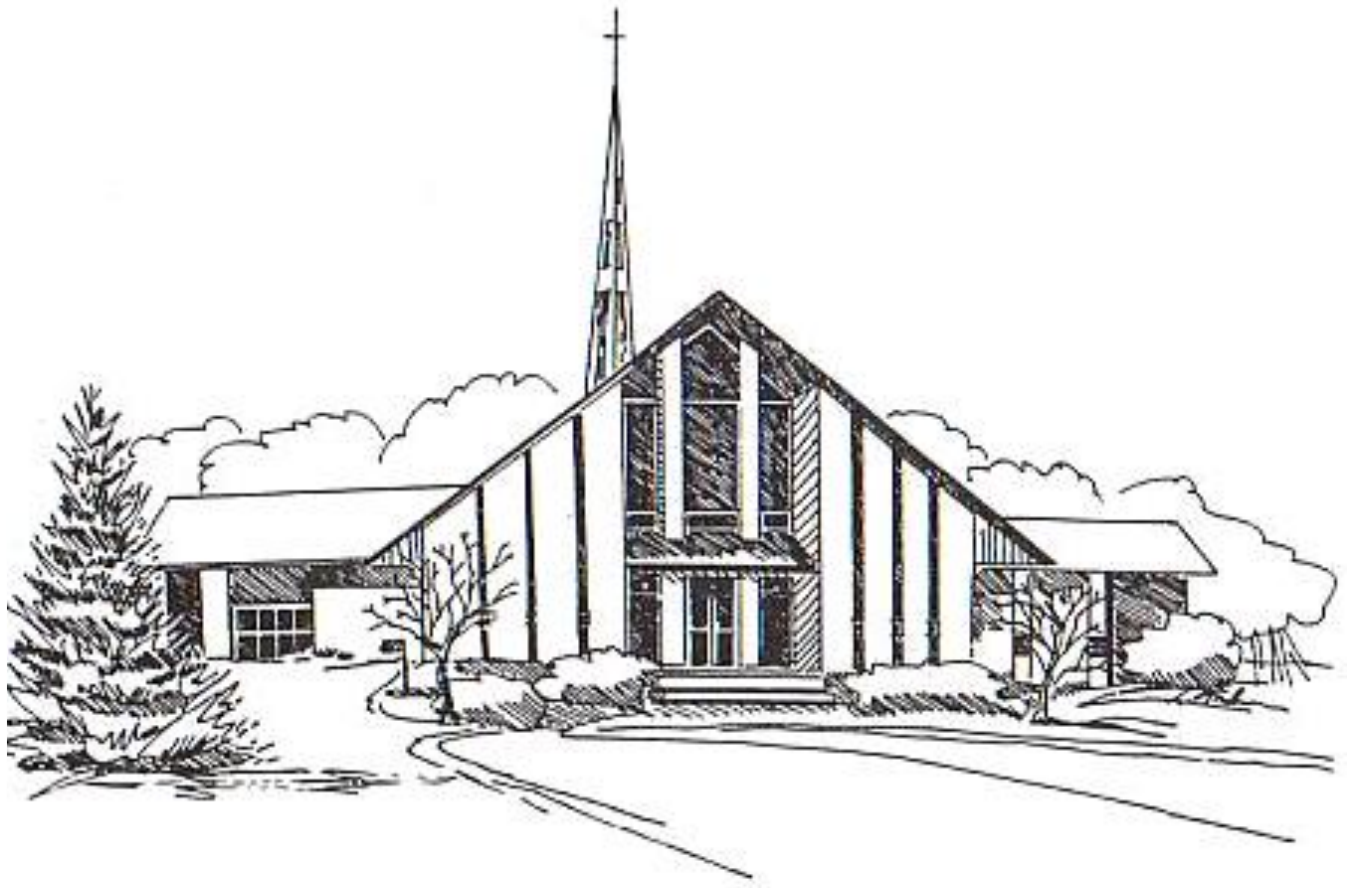


**FAITH UNITED CHURCH
OF
CHRIST**



**5992 Route 378
Center Valley, Pennsylvania 18034
610.282.3939**

**Rev. Dr. Bruce C. Stevenson, Lead Pastor
Mr. Dennis J. Duda, Organist-Director of Music**

**SERVICE OF WORSHIP
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025**

ASSEMBLE IN GOD'S NAME

PRELUDE

A PRAYER UPON ENTERING GOD'S HOUSE

Creator, we have come in response to your call to worship you. We have come to be in community with our neighbor. We have come onsite and online. We have come with quiet contemplation and boisterous joy. We have come in grief and with hope. We come to gather in your name, to honor your presence, and to give you praise. Amen.

WORDS OF WELCOME

CENTERING OUR HEARTS ON WORSHIP

* **OPENING HYMN: *RENEW YOUR CHURCH*** **311**

* **CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Pastor: Call upon the Holy One, who is gracious and merciful.

People: We love the Holy One, who has heard our cry,
responds to our prayers, and abides with us through
our distress.

Pastor: Call upon the Holy One, who is gracious and merciful.

People: We praise the Righteous One, who protects, provides,
and prepares their people.

Pastor: Call upon the Holy One, who is gracious and merciful.

People: We worship the Radiant One, who walks before us in
the land of the living.

REJOICING IN GOD'S GRACE

* **CALL TO AND CONFESSION OF SIN:**

Loving God, we confess that you are a God of transformation and

a solid rock. We strive to be like trees planted by the water, steadfast and unmovable at the same time that we embrace your continuing creative acts in the world and in our lives. We struggle at times to know when to remain firm and when to progress forward. Infuse us with your wisdom and discernment along with courage and grace to be fully who you have created us to be.

* **THE KYRIE**

750

Leader: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Congregation: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Leader: Christ, have mercy upon us.

Congregation: Christ, have mercy upon us.

Leader: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Congregation: Lord, have mercy upon us.

* **WORDS OF GRACE**

Pastor: O Lord, open out lips.

People: And our mouths will show forth our praise.

* **THE GLORIA PATRI**

759

Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

* **WE SHARE PEACE – LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH**

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me

Let There Be Peace on Earth The peace that was meant to be

With God our Creator, we are Family

Let us walk with each other In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me Let this be the moment now.

With ev'ry step I take Let this be my solemn vow

To take each moment and live Each moment in peace eternally

Let there be peace on earth And let it begin with me

LEARNING ABOUT GOD

MISSION MOMENT: “BLESSING BOX”

-Nicolas Capoccia

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON:

Psalter: 65:9 – 13

Gospel: Matthew 19:10 – 14

DEDICATION OF YOUTH MINISTRIES

CHILDREN'S SERMON

DEDICATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Pastor: The time you spend teaching, caring for, and being with the children of this community is a special ministry. We ask you to keep in mind that what you are doing is ministry. Our children are delicate growing souls. Tend them with care and love.

Parents: We thank you for your willingness to be with our children, to teach them, to guide them, and to be with them. We remind you that you are role models for our children. How you treat them and how you interact with each other teaches them more about who we are and what we believe than any lesson.

Youth: Thank you for being our leaders. We look forward to spending time with you, having fun with you, and learning from you. We ask that you remember that we are people, too, and that you respect us.

Teachers: We accept the responsibilities of being in the classrooms with our children. We promise to bring our enthusiasm, talents, and energies to helping them grow into the individuals that they will become. We ask that you support us in this endeavor. Be there when we need help. Listen to us when we need your ear.

Congregation: We acknowledge and honor the role that you have within our community. We know that this is not something you can do alone. We are all teachers and we

will strive to remember that. We are all here to support and help you, each in our own way.

Unison: This is the beginning of a new year. We are all part of this one community, children and adults alike. May we all grow and be enriched by our time together.

Pastor: On this first day of Sunday School, I want to take a moment to dedicate and commission those among us who have chosen to take on the important responsibility for church school teaching. At this time, I would invite all those here who are going to teach Sunday School this year at Faith Church to stand. As they do, let me remind you that a group of teachers for our littlest ones are already in the classroom, doing the work to which we dedicate them.

To you as teachers let me say this: In taking on this responsibility, you have committed yourselves to nurturing the spirits of the youngest members of this congregation. Do you promise now, before them and this congregation, to do your best to honor them, teach them, and nurture their religious growth as Faithful Christians?

Teachers: We do.

Pastor: Do you, the children and young people of the church school, promise to honor, respect, and nurture these teachers with your hearts and with your minds?

Youth: We do.

Pastor: Do you, the congregation of Faith United Church of Christ, promise these teachers and young people your support, knowing that religion cannot be taught only in a classroom, but must also be encouraged in the home and beyond?

Congregation: We do.

Pastor: Take up the challenge of this good work. May you have fun, grow and learn together, and be a continuing example

of the importance of religious education both to us gathered here, and to the world beyond. Amen.

HYMN: *JESUS LOVES ME!*

327

WATER COMMUNION

Pastor: As a Christian community we are accustomed to regular participation in Communion, the Lord's Supper. In that ritual, we are given a taste of Christ's table where all feast together, in peace, in loving relationship, and in justice. This morning we enter that story again, from a different element among us.

We remember, today, the Spirit of God hovering over the waters from which things began. From and through a divine stirring, creation unfolds. From water, we are born. As the Lakota people have taught us, "Water is Life."

Water reminds us of our limits – without it, our lives and communities cannot be sustained.

Water reminds us of what refreshes and renews our bodies and souls both spiritually and physically.

Water reminds us of our inseparability with all life. With land and other creatures. With eras before us. And those yet to come.

And water reminds us of our basic dependence on this resource and each other. While water is polluted for profit. Hoarded and privatized. But we all thirst. We remember it is our responsibility to share and protect this earth and its resources with all of God's beloved creation.

This morning, as those who brought water with them come to the altar, not to receive but to offer a symbol of gratitude for all God's gifts of creation, may we listen for God's voice in the waters – water from the sacred places of our lives which unites once again and reminds us of our own

connection – to the earth, to one another, and to God, our primary source of life.

Unison: Creative One, we give you thanks for the wonder and power and beauty of this earth as you created it. How lucky we are to live as a part of this whole.

We ask your blessing upon the waters brought forth by this congregation and all the bodies of water they represent. You have entrusted us to care for creation, for the earth, and for water. Forgive us for the ways we mistreat this precious resource. We acknowledge the injustice of keeping access to clean water in the hands of the privileged and greedy. We acknowledge the ways we take for granted our access to water. We acknowledge we hide from our dependency on this source and other natural elements from which we are born.

Forgive us, O God, for all the ways we betray the gifts of water and its relationship to all life. As we bring our offerings from communities near and far, may we be reminded of how you weave our lives together, bodily, spiritually, relationally, ecologically. May we remember our baptism. May we remember our calling to resist evil together, to seek justice for all who thirst, and to protect people and land from corporations who threaten to steal or pollute bodies of water.

With joy and thanksgiving, we pray, Amen.

Bring water forward

Pastor: God of Ocean and Sea, River and Pond, Rain Drops and Morning Dew, what grace your presence is among us. May we live in gratitude, through posture and action. May we be faithful in returning land to its tenders, returning to right-relationship with our own creaturely bodies, and returning

our attention to the protection of this planet. That life may flourish, locally and globally. May it be so.

THE RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION

LITANY OF INTENT

Pastor: Friends in Christ, we are all received into the church through the Sacrament of Baptism. These people have found nurture and support in the midst of the family of Christ.

People: **They have been led by the Spirit to affirm their baptism and to claim in our presence their covenantal relationship with Christ and the members of the Christian church.**

Pastor: They are here, as we are here, to endeavor to love God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind. God help us.

People: **They are here, as we are here, to endeavor to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. God help us.**

Pastor: Friends who are joining, we rejoice in your pilgrimage of faith which has brought you to this time and place.

People: **We give thanks for every community of faith which has been your spiritual home, and we celebrate your presence in this household of faith.**

Pastor: Do you promise, by the grace of God, to continue in your pilgrimage of faith, to be Christ's disciple, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?

Candidates: *We promise, with the help of God.*

People: **Do you promise to walk with us in faithfulness and in Christian love? And do you promise, that so far as able, you will participate in the life of this church, by**

worshipping God with us, and offering your time, talent and means for the ministry of this church and for the larger church of which this is a part?

Candidates: We promise, with the help of God.

Pastor: Friends, we then rise to welcome you as partners in the common life of this church and share our covenant of mission with you.

- * Unison:** I do now in the presence of God and before this assembly give myself to the One whom Jesus called “Abba, Father” as the God in whose love I am grounded and whose realm I serve; to Jesus Christ, God incarnate, to whom I surrender and who rules my life; to God the Holy Spirit as the One who sustains, recreates, and guides me. I will share God’s everlasting covenant by long and living responsibly in communion with this one God. And I do furthermore engage to walk with my brothers and sisters in the wider Church and Faith United Church of Christ secure in God’s grace prepared in gratitude to live by the promise and serve in the hope of the Gospel.

THE RIGHT HAND OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

DEDICATING OURSELVES TO GOD’S WILL

- * AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: A *NEW CREED***

**We are not alone,
we live in God’s world.**

**We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.**

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

**to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.**

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND INTERCESSION

Pastor: God of grace and gift; we thank and praise you for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Holy Spirit, enlighten our thinking, strengthen our will, guide us and give us courage that we may serve God our Father by living faithfully where we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(The names of specific people, places, and circumstances may be lifted up at this time)

Pastor: Gracious God, as you have promised, may it come to pass. We pray in Christ's name and offer the prayer He offered;

Unison: **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. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

GIVE THANKS TO GOD

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

OFFERTORY

CHOIR ANTHEM: *POWER OF THE CROSS*

*** OFFERTORY RESPONSE – THE DOXOLOGY 780**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

*** PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

Generous God, may these gifts honor your name and your generous Spirit alive within us. We thank you for the opportunity and privilege of contributing to your kingdom and our world.

Amen.

COMMISSIONING OF OUR CONSISTORY

GREETING

Pastor: Hear these words from the apostle Paul: My sisters and brothers, I want you to know the truth about gifts from the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.

People: **There are different ways of serving, but the same God is served.**

There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to each of us for our particular service.

The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

PRESENTATION

Pastor: Friends in Christ, the elders of this church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has called these candidates to serve as elders.

Elders, servants of God, we invite you to come forward as a sign of your acceptance of the call to this ministry.

Our church recognizes that God calls the whole church and every member to participate in and extend the

ministry of Jesus Christ by witnessing to the gospel in church and society. The United Church of Christ seeks to undergird the ministry of its members by nurturing faith, calling forth gifts, and equipping members for Christian service.

EXHORTATION

Pastor: Hear these words from the apostle Paul: At all times make it your aim to do good to one another and to all people. Be joyful always, pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants of you, in your life in Christ Jesus.

EXAMINATION

Pastor: My Friends and co-laborers in Christ's ministries, before God and this congregation, I ask you: Are you persuaded that God has called you to the ministry of an Elders, and are you ready with the help of God to enter this ministry on behalf of the whole church and to serve faithfully according to the faith and order of Faith United Church of Christ and the United Church of Christ?

Candidates: I am.

Pastor: With the church throughout the world, do you hear the word of God in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and do you accept the word of God as the rule of Christian faith and practice?

Candidates: I do.

Pastor: Will you perform the duties of your ministry at Faith United Church of Christ as one summoned by God to labor, giving God the glory and looking to God for your strength?

Candidates: I will, trusting in God's grace.

COVENANT

Pastor: Members of Faith United Church of Christ, will those who are able rise and affirm your covenant with these individuals as leaders in your midst?

People: **We receive you as a commissioned leader among us. We promise to labor with you as your brothers and sisters in Christ. We gather with you as a sign of our mutual ministry in Christ's name.**

PRAYER OF COMMISSIONING

Pastor: Let us pray.

Almighty God, who out of your great love gathered one church by the power of the Holy Spirit to be the light of the world, we thank you for those in all ages who have given their lives to tend it, to care for it, to lead it, and to serve in every way to forward its ministry. Now we thank you especially for these servants, whom we commission in your name for the ministry to which you have called them. Guide, inspire, empower them, and keep them faithful to your call that by their lives, your church may continue to be blessed and its mission brought closer to the fulfillment you intend; through Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

All: **Amen.**

DECLARATION

Pastor: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of this congregation of the United Church of Christ, I declare that you are a commissioned worker in this congregation.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

GO IN GOD'S NAME

* **CLOSING HYMN: LORD, DISMISS US WITH YOUR BLESSING 77**

* **BENEDICTION AND THREEFOLD AMEN**

MEDITATION

Almighty God, grant that the words we have heard this day with our ears may be grafted into our hearts through your grace, that they may produce in us the fruits of a good life, to the praise and honor of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

POSTLUDE

*Would those who are able please stand.

CHOIR ANTHEM: POWER OF THE CROSS

- L. King quoting I. Watts and L. Mason

A dying man hung on a cross to set us free, He paid the cost. God sacrificed His holy Lamb, His precious Son, the great I AM! O the power of the cross! Lift it high to draw the world to Him. For our gain, He suffered loss O the power of the cross! There was a cross that bore Your name, scarred by sin and stained with shame. But, on that cross, if eyes could see, He took your place on Calvary. O the power of the cross! Lift it high to draw the world to Him. For our gain, He suffered loss. O the power of the cross. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride, my pride. O the power of the cross! Lift it high to draw the world to Him. For our gain, He suffered loss O the power of the cross, the cross! O the power, the mighty power of the cross!

Welcome to Faith Church this Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. We are glad to have you worshiping with us. May our time together serve as an inspiration for the days and weeks ahead. Please sign and pass the Friendship Pads provided for you in the pews.

The altar flowers this morning are presented by Chuck & Karen Talboo in memory of their mothers.

Welcome to Back to Church Sunday! Throughout our service we will be dedicating our Sunday School teachers, celebrating Water Communion, receiving New Members, and commissioning our Consistory.

Join us after worship for Cake and Punch and to welcome our new members – *Marilyn Blead, Dorothy Bortz, Susan Bortz, Charmaine Fegley, Betty Leibensperger, Nancy Mihalik, Cindy Siegfried, and Nancy Strauss.*

Today is the last day to donate school supplies for the Caring Place.

Faith Singers meet at 9:30 am and 11:30 am on Sunday mornings in the loft. Please join us!

Penny Party Donations – We need your help to make this fundraiser a huge success! The Fundraising Committee is looking for donations for the **Penny Party**. Details are included in the September issue of Focus on Faith. There are totes in the narthex to place your donated items into. We will also be accepting baskets for a basket raffle or items to add to a basket. All donations are greatly appreciated.

CALENDAR

Sandy's Office Hours: Remotely - Monday 9 – 4
In Office - Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 9 – 4; Closed Friday

- Today** - **Back to Church Sunday**
- **9:00 am Sunday School**
- **10:15 am Worship**
- **11:30 am Faith Singers Rehearsal**
- Monday** - **Sandy Works Remotely**
- **7 pm Budget & Finance Meeting**
- Tuesday** - **2 pm Faith in Stitches**
- Thursday** - **7 pm Consistory**
- Friday** - **Office Closed; Pastor's Day Off**
- Sunday** - **9 am Sunday School**
- **9:30 am Faith Singers Rehearsal**
- **10:15 am Worship**
- **10:30 am Faith Singers Rehearsal**

Thanks to our volunteers:

	September 15	September 22
Head Usher:	Kim Ritter	Kim Ritter
Ushers:	Deb Herstine Linda Torrence	Karen & Chuck Talboo
Lay Reader:	Patience Stevenson	Karen Talboo
Financial Sec:	Bruce Torrence	Bruce Torrence
Altar Flowers:	Talboos	Rose Mirth
Lawn Crew:	Mirth Crew	Bruce Torrence

Office: 610-282-3939; faithchurchcv@gmail.com

Sandy works remotely on Mondays.

You can text or call her at 610-967-6232.

Pastor: 610-248-5586; pastorbruce.faithucc@outlook.com

Organist/Music Director: 215-361-8641; ddduda@verizon.net