

# **FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**



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



**SERVICE OF WORSHIP**  
**FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY**  
**SEPTEMBER 21, 2025**

**ASSEMBLE IN GOD'S NAME**

**PRELUDE**

**A PRAYER UPON ENTERING GOD'S HOUSE**

*Great God, who gathers us together in spirit and in truth, sanctify our time together. Grant us wisdom and discernment. Open our hearts to receive and to give. Be glorified in our worship and the transformation that moves us forward as your people. In your glorious and precious name, we pray. Amen.*

**WORDS OF WELCOME**

**CENTERING OUR HEARTS ON WORSHIP**

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

**\* CALL TO WORSHIP:**

**Pastor:** Praise the Holy One! From the rising of the sun until its setting, the name of God deserves our praise!

**People:** **Who is like our God...seated on high?**

**Pastor:** Praise the Most High, who observes all things and remembers the poor and those in need.

**People:** **God our Righteousness raises the lowly and levels the exalted.**

**Pastor:** Praise the Righteous One, who is just and mighty, who repairs and redeems.

**People:** **The Redeemer pours out love and justice, compassion and conviction, hope and salvation. Praise the Holy One!**

**REJOICING IN GOD'S GRACE**

**\* CALL TO AND CONFESSION OF SIN**

**\* PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**

**Redeemer, forgive us for defiling your holy ground. We have not cared for your creation, we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves, and we have not been faithful with the gifts you have given to us. We ask you not to clean our slate but to renew our hearts. Soften the hardness this world encourages us to wrap around our hearts, and replace it with compassion, empathy, and accountability to our neighbor, siblings, and creation. Awaken a new life within us. Amen.**

**\* 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 OF 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

## PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

## THE SCRIPTURE LESSON:

Gospel: Matthew 28:19 – 20

## HOMILY: *The Job of The Church*

## DEDICATION OF YOUTH MINISTRIES

## THE YOUTH SERMON

## DEDICATION OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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.

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.

**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.**

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

Pastor: 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 youth 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, and we thank you for your willingness to be with the youth among us, 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 youth. 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.

**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.

**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.

### **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: *FEEL THE SPIRIT***

**\* 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 AND DEDICATION:**  
**Abundant God, may the gifts we give along with your miraculous power be sufficient to the needs of the community and a blessing to the world that you love. Amen.**

### **GO IN GOD'S NAME**

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

\* **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: *FEEL THE SPIRIT* – R. E. Schram**

Ev'ry time I feel the Spirit movin' in my heart, I will pray. Yes, ev'ry time I feel the Spirit movin'; in my heart, I will pray. Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart; Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart. Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart. I'm gonna sing when the Spirit says sing, sing, the Spirit says sing, and obey the Spirit of the Lord. "Cause ev'ry time, ev'ry time, ev'ry time, in my heart, I will pray. Yes, ev'ry time, ev'ry time, ev'ry time, in my heart I will, I will pray. I'm gonna sing. I'm gonna sing!

**Welcome to Faith Church this Fourteenth 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 Doris & Ray Horwath in celebration of their 63<sup>rd</sup> Wedding Anniversary.**

**Today is our Back to Church Celebration at Faith UCC!**

We've kicked off the start of a new Sunday School year and during worship will dedicate our Youth Ministries, Celebrate Water Communion, Commission our Consistory, and welcome back the Faith Singers! We'll end the day with **a church picnic! Please plan**

**to stay for food, fellowship, and fun!**

This year Betty Lou's Pantry will be holding **a coat drive for the children whose families use the Pantry**. We will be collecting children's coats **through the end of October**. Please be sure they are clean and in good condition. Coats will be distributed during the month of November. If you have an adult coat you wish to donate, place it in a bag labeled "Adult Coat". These coats will be donated to The Caring Place in Allentown.

**It is time to start wrapping our shoe boxes for the Holiday Shoe Box mission. Please save your regular sized shoe boxes and bring them in for wrapping. If you wish to wrap shoe boxes please let us know. We can provide you with wrapping paper if necessary.** All boxes must be wrapped and prepared for distribution to the congregation **by October 26!** Filled shoe boxes must be returned by **Sunday, November 23.**

### **CALENDAR**

*Monday (Remotely) – 9 – 4 pm*

*Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday – 9 – 4 pm*

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|-----------------|--|
| <b>Today</b>    | - 9:00 am Sunday School<br>- 10:15 am Worship<br>- Back to Church Sunday<br>- Church Picnic                          |
| <b>Tuesday</b>  | - 2 pm Faith in Stitches   |
| <b>Thursday</b> | - 3 pm Mission Meeting<br>- 7 pm Consistory Meeting  |
| <b>Friday</b>   | - Office Closed; Pastor's Day Off  |
| <b>Sunday</b>   | - 9:00 am Sunday School<br>- 10:15 am Worship<br>- Harvest Home<br>- Bible Sunday<br>- 1 – 6 pm Hall Rental Red Door |

*Thanks to our volunteers!*

	<b>September 21</b>	<b>September 28</b>
Head Usher:	Bruce Torrence	Bruce Torrence
Greeter:	Rose Mirth	Cindy Talaber
Lay Reader:	Patience Stevenson	Barb Maursky
Financial Sec:	Bruce Torrence	Bruce Torrence
Altar Flowers:	Horwaths	Barb Maursky
Lawn:	Mirth Crew	Bruce Torrence

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