

The United Church of Big Rapids
(120 South State St., Big Rapids MI 49037)



August 29, 2021

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

Partita français, by Craig A. Penfield

Call to Worship

- Leader: Come to listen for all God seeks to teach us. God has given us birth by the word of truth.
- People: We are drawn to God as to a lover. We leap for joy when we know God's care.**
- Leader: Every perfect gift comes to us from God. God's image is a part of each one of us.
- People: God's grace has been poured into our lives. Wisdom and understanding are offered to us.**
- Leader: Who will dwell on God's holy hill? Those who walk uprightly and speak the truth.
- People: We will honor God by honoring our neighbors. We will act toward them as we wish to be treated.**

Hymn #370

Just as I Am, Without One Plea, tune: Woodworth

Verse 1

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou biddest me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God,
I come, I come!

Verse 3

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God,
I come, I come!

Verse 2

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God,
I come, I come!

Verse 4

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God,
I come, I come!

Invocation

Our hearts overflow with longings too great for words, gracious God. You have been so good to us, yet we are dissatisfied. We have many things to enjoy, but seldom have we found our home with you. Meet us here to anoint us with the oil of gladness. Awaken us with singing and speak your truth to draw us away from the lure of wickedness. May this time of worship help us to become a wise and understanding people, eager to live as the body of Christ, making a difference in the world as Jesus did so long ago on the Galilean shore. Amen.

Blessing of the Backpacks

Scripture

Old Testament Reading

Song of Solomon 2:8-13

⁸ The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. ⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. ¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; ¹¹ for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. ¹² The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. ¹³ The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Epistle Reading

James 1:17-27

¹⁷ Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Creator of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸ In fulfillment of God's own purpose God gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of God's creatures. ¹⁹ You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹ Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act-- they will be blessed in their doing. ²⁶ If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Creator, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Leader: This is what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

People: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Be Love, Rev. Greg Larsen

Reflection Reading

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, ² they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³ (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴ and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) ⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" ⁶ He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; ⁷ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' ⁸ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." ¹⁴ Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." ²¹ For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²² adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Prayer Requests

Pastoral Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

Please pray the words that are comfortable to you. Here is what we use:

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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Call to Offering

Offertory

The Love of God, by Jason W. Krug

Prayer of Dedication

ALL: Our hearts overflow with thanksgiving for all the bounty you entrust to our stewardship, O God of light. You have reached into the shadows, where we often flee, to rescue us and give us your work to do. As you have freed us from the chains of sin, we seek to offer healing to others as we listen and share and do. Bless our offering of self and substance, we pray. Amen.

Hymn #423 (New Century)

Great Is Your Faithfulness, tune: Faithfulness

Verse 1

Great is your faithfulness, O God, Creator
With you no shadow of turning we see.
You do not change, your compassions they
fail not;
All of your goodness forever will be.
Great is your faithfulness!
Great is your faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed your hand has provided,
Great is your faithfulness, God, unto me!

Verse 3

Pardon for sin and a peace so enduring,
Your own dear presence to cheer and to guide.
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside.
Great is your faithfulness!
Great is your faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed your hand has provided,
Great is your faithfulness, God, unto me!

Verse 2

Summer and winter, and springtime and
harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To your great faithfulness, mercy, and love.
Great is your faithfulness!
Great is your faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed your hand has provided,
Great is your faithfulness, God, unto me!

Benediction

- Pastor: God offers to each of us deep inner cleansing. We can become whole people, unstained by the world.
- People: In the world around us, life is cheap. Violence destroys what is valuable to God.**
- Pastor: We are called to challenge this destruction. We are to love righteousness and turn from wickedness.
- People: We want to witness to the power of love. We believe people can change and turn from evil.**
- Pastor: God's Word transforms all who hear and heed it. God blesses those who are doers of the Word..
- People: God anoints us with the oil of gladness. Our hearts overflow with God's good gifts.**
- Pastor: Beloved,and may God be with you.
- People: And also with you.**
- All: Amen**

Postlude

Medieval Fanfare & Recessional, by Walker Baylor

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Meijer “Simply Give” program has chosen *Project Starburst* as the recipient for funds given between July 4 and October 2. For every dollar donated during this period, Meijer matches dollar for dollar. Donors can also make out a check to Project Starburst for the Simply Give program and Starburst staff will take the funds donated to Meijer. It can be mailed to the Starburst address or dropped off at their office.

School supply drive – Thank you for your generous giving! Today we will bless our donations and get them to Project Starburst for distribution to those clients in need of a little extra help beginning their school year.

Prayer requests – If you have prayer requests that you would like lifted during our worship service, please send them via email or call the church office. You can also add your requests to our telephone prayer chain by calling Yvonne Kilbourne at 231-796-3729.

Building usage – You may notice that the parking lot becomes a bit full on certain days of the week. Our building is beginning to show signs of life with outside groups using our facilities! Please remember that masks are required inside the building! To keep the calendar organized, please be sure to check with the church office if you are planning a meeting. Commissions that have regular meeting days are on the calendar. The office can also set up Zoom meetings for those who need to accommodate remote participants.

Please note the change in the church office hours to 9:00 am – 1:00 pm, Monday through Friday. You may contact the office at any time via email, secretary@unitedchurchbr.org or you can call **231-527-9567** during those hours with questions or concerns. This phone number also accepts messages outside of regular business hours. You can also mail the office at 120 S. State Street, Big Rapids, MI 49307.

Altar flowers and ushers are needed for each of our in-person worship services. If you would like to volunteer to be an usher, or to provide altar flowers and would like a dedication in the bulletin, please contact the church office. A flower sign-up sheet is also available on the bulletin board outside the office.

Financial Information – the Governing Board and Treasurer are sharing this data monthly for you. If you have questions, contact Amy Buse, Treasurer, or a member of the Governing Board.

Financial Update:

	Expenditures	Income
July 2021	\$6,424.01	\$11,652.76
Year-to-Date (Jan-July)	\$106,167.87	\$122,074.16

* The income and expenses both for July 2021 and YTD include in kind donations of \$4,822.52; and the parking lot income has not been expensed yet.

*The altar flowers today are given by Susan H. Grant
in honor of Women's Equality Day, August 26th..*



The United Church of Big Rapids

Our vision is to honor all children of God through following the way of Jesus Christ.

Our mission is to celebrate all creation as an active presence in our community, engaging in transformational worship and nurturing families and relationships, as we cultivate Jesus' justice and love.



The United Church of Big Rapids is a union of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ. It is a congregation that worships together, seeks opportunities to serve others, encourages one another to grow in intellect and spirit, strives for social justice, and fully embraces Jesus' call to love one another as God loves us.



Because we believe God's whole creation is good, blessed, and sacred, we are an open and affirming community of faith. We celebrate persons of all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, family structures, faith backgrounds, abilities, and economic circumstances.

As valued members of this congregation all persons are invited to equally participate in the full life of the church - worship, sacraments, ministry, fellowship, leadership, responsibilities, sorrows, blessings, and the continued presence of Jesus Christ.



Ministers.....	The Body of Christ
Pastor Emeritus.....	Rev. Jon Fleming
Transitional Pastor.....	Rev. Greg Larsen
Secretary.....	Julie Cole
Organist.....	Paul Heidemann
Bell Choir Director	Judy Tressler
Moderator.....	Marshall Henry
Elder in Charge.....	Marshall Henry
Sound Board.....	Wayne McKay
Sanctuary Sound.....	Marshall Henry
Liturgist.....	Dee Van Horn
Ushers.....	John Gahrs, Carlene Gahrs, Maryanne Heidemann
Livestream Team.....	
Technical Advisors.....	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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