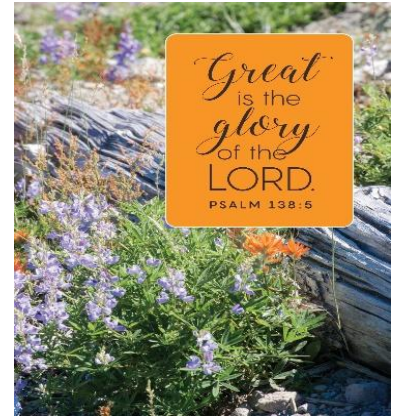


The United Church of Big Rapids
July 27, 2025
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

❖ *You are invited to stand*



Welcome

Announcements

Prelude

Lamb of God, Twila Paris, arr. by Mark Hayes

❖ **Call to Worship**

Leader: We gather to give thanks to You, O Lord, with all our heart!

People: We will sing Your praises before all creation, and rejoice in Your steadfast love!

Leader: You have created us O Lord, and made us for Yourself.

People: In You we become everything You have made us to be!

❖ **Invocation**

Leader: Let us pray,

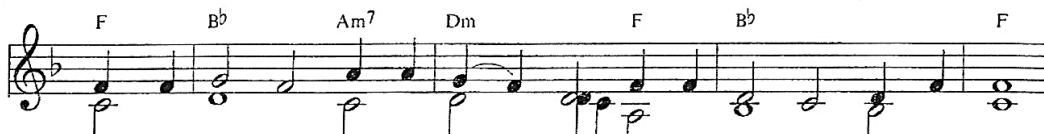
People: Faithful God,

We come into your presence with thanksgiving, deeply grateful for the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown toward us, your people. When we call out to you, you answer. When we are exhausted, you give us the strength to go on. When we find ourselves in trouble, you are there, standing beside us. And so we come before you with gratitude and praise, offering you the worship of our hearts and lives. Open our eyes to see and know You here among us; open our ears to recognize Your voice. And then send us out from here, to live and work in the world as Your faithful disciples. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service



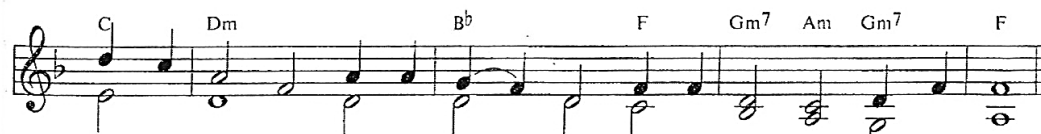
1 Lord, whose love in hum-ble ser - vice Bore the weight of hu-man need,
 2 Still your chil-dren wan-der home - less; Still the hun-gry cry for bread;
 3 As we wor-ship, grant us vi - sion, Till your love's re - veal-ing light



Who up - on the cross, for - sak - en, Worked your mer-cy's per - fect deed:
 Still the cap - tives long for free - dom; Still in grief we mourn our dead.
 In its height and depth and great - ness Dawns up - on our quick-ened sight,



We, your ser-vants, bring the wor-ship Not of voice a - lone, but heart;
 As you, Lord, in deep com-pas - sion Healed the sick and freed the soul,
 Mak-ing known the needs and bur - dens Your com-pas - sion bids us bear,



Con-se-crat - ing to your pur - pose Ev - 'ry gift which you im - part.
 By your Spir - it send your pow - er To our world to make it whole.
 Stir-ring us to ar-dent ser - vice, Your a - bun - dant life to share.

Call to Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Unison Prayer for Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Leader: Let us pray,

People: **Loving God,**

In Jesus you offer life to the world and love to its people. When we see life only for ourselves, forgive us. Help us to hear your transforming love speaking to us of respect, dignity and worth, telling us that we are loved and that we are to love one another. In the knowledge of this love, work through us to bring your justice to the world, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Silent Confession

Assurance of Forgiveness

Scripture Lesson *(from the Revised Standard Version Bible)*

Psalm Reading

Psalm 138

- ¹ I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
- ² I bow down toward your holy temple
And give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness,
for you have exalted your name and your word
above everything.
- ³ On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased my strength of soul.
- ⁴ All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
- ⁵ They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
- ⁶ For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he perceives from far away.
- ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
- ⁸ The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Old Testament Lesson

Genesis 18:20-33

- ²⁰ Then the lord said, "How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin! ²¹ I must go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me, and if not, I will know."
- ²² So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. ²³ Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" ²⁶ And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to my lord, I who am but dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." ²⁹ Again he

spoke to him, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of the forty, I will not do it." ³⁰ Then he said, "Oh, do not let my lord be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." ³¹ He said, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to my lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." ³² Then he said, "Oh, do not let my lord be angry if I speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." ³³ And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

Leader: The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God endures forever.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

The Sacred Art of Negotiation – Rev. Amy Ruhf-Brien

Sharing of our Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer

Our Father/Creator, who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom/kin_dom 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom/kin_dom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Call to Offering

❖ Offertory

Prelude No. 1, by J. S. Bach

❖ Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen.

❖ Prayer of Dedication

We thank you, God, for loving us into the freedom of a generous life. Bless these gifts we bring in response to the blessing you have already given us with the gift of life. Form our lives anew into living offerings, sharing Your love with a grace that frees others. Amen.

When Peace Like a River



1 When peace like a riv - er at - tend - eth my way, when sor - rows like
 2 Though Sa - tan should buf - fet, though tri - als should come, let this blest as -
 3 My sin—O, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought, my sin—not in
 4 And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled



sea bil - lows roll, what - ev - er my lot, thou hast taught me to
 sur - ance con - trol: that Christ has re - gard - ed my help - less es -
 part but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no
 back as a scroll, the trump shall re - sound and the Lord shall de -



say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."
 tate, and has shed his own blood for my soul. It is well
 more: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! It is
 scend: "E - ven so"—it is well with my soul.



well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.
 well with my soul,



Welcome to our visitors today! We're glad you chose to worship with us! Please be sure to sign the attendance sheet with your name and email/address in the pew in front of you. We like to keep up with those that visit us.



❖ The altar flowers today are given by Mary Olshewski.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Give to the Pantry! Project Starburst continues to have a high demand for food. The Mission Commission's "Give to the Pantry" program has identified pasta as the "food of the month" for July. With the demand, any non-perishable food item is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued, generous support.

Thank you for joining us in worship today, Pastor Amy! We are excited at the possibility of having you join us as our settled pastor! Enjoy your stay in Michigan!

Thank you for your accompaniment today, Ginny Kerwin. We are blessed to have so many talented members of our congregation who are always willing to help out when needed.

Notice of Congregational Meeting – There will be a Special Congregational meeting today after worship. The Search and Call team elected to secure a new settled pastor has completed their work and have selected a candidate for approval by the congregation. The Church By-laws require the selected candidate be approved by the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting. Please stay to make sure a quorum is present.

A Celebration Brunch is being held after worship today to celebrate Rev Amy Ruhf-Brien and to say thank you for the hard work of the Pastor Search Committee. Please, join us in gratitude and thankfulness.

Contacting the church office - You may contact the office at any time via email, secretary@unitedchurchbr.org or you can call **231-527-9567** between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 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. You can also find information about our church on our website: www.unitedchurchbr.org or by visiting our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/UnitedBigRapids.


Pastor Devon's contact information – If you need to contact Pastor Devon, you may contact her by phone for pastoral care needs at 231-629-2302. You may also reach out via email: devonherrell@gmail.com. Pastor Devon does have another full-time job, so in-person meeting time is limited. You may contact the church office to set up an appointment.




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
Worship Lead.....	Rev. Amy Ruhf-Brien
Administrative Assistant	Julie Cole
Organist	Paul Heidemann
Chancel Choir Director	Linda Rinehart
Chancel Choir Assistant Director	Katie McInnis
Bell Choir Director.....	Judy Tressler
Custodian	Larry Carnes
Nursery Attendant	Michell Kamptner
Moderator	Marshall Henry
Sanctuary Sound	Wayne McKay
Sound Board	Trish McHugh, Peter McHugh
Liturgist	Julie Cole
Ushers.....	Paul Challender, Jane Grzybowski, Barb Johnson, Marge Punches
Fellowship Time Hosts.....	Congregational Group Life Commission, led by Roger & Megan Vajda
Livestream Team.....	Amy Buse, Adam Jewell, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay
Technical Advisors	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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