

**The United Church of Big Rapids
June 1, 2025
The Seventh Sunday of Easter**

❖ *You are invited to stand*



Welcome

Announcements

Prelude

My Gift to You, by Jane Wood

❖ **Call to Worship**

Leader: Gracious Creator, you invite us into relationship with every breath.

People: Settle us, center us, and calm us.

Leader: Open our senses to the ever-moving flowing of your Spirit.

People: As you call us to become one with you.

Leader: We enter this moment of worship

People: with humility and the hope of grace. Amen.

❖ **Call to Confession**

We worry if we confess what rests heavily on our hearts, we will be judged and condemned. Yet God desires we come close and open ourselves to the possibility of transformation and grace. When we confess our sin, we acknowledge God's love for us and Christ's prayer for us, opening ourselves to forgiveness and new life. Trust in in this love, let us confess our sins.

❖ **Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God, you desire that the world might see your light shine through us. Yet we confess we are often too blinded by the glittering temptations of this world. We turn from your way, hurting the very ones we were called to serve, in our action and our inaction. We grow frustrated with each other, seeking to silence anything besides our own desires. We fail to see your righteousness and champion greed and discord in the name of power and popularity. Forgive us. Melt us and mold us into more faithful disciples, seeking your light, reflecting your mercy, and sharing your grace. Amen.

❖ **Words of Assurance**

❖ **Hymn #455** (*verses 1,2,5,6 only*)

All Creatures of Our God and King, tune: Lasst uns erfreuen

Scripture Lesson

Old Testament Lesson

Psalm 97

- ¹ The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
- ² Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
- ³ Fire goes before him,
and consumes his adversaries on every side.
- ⁴ His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.
- ⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,
before the Lord of all the earth.
- ⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his glory.
- ⁷ All worshipers of images are put to shame,
those who make their boast in
worthless idols;
all gods bow down before him.
- ⁸ Zion hears and is glad,
and the towns of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgments, O God.
- ⁹ For you, O Lord, are most high
over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.
- ¹⁰ The Lord loves those who hate evil;
He guards the lives of his faithful;
He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.
- ¹¹ Light dawns for the righteous,
and joy for the upright in heart.
- ¹² Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

Gospel Lesson

Acts 16:16-34

¹⁶ One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." ¹⁸ She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰ When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews ²¹ and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³ After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; and then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. ³⁴ He brought them into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that they had become a believer in God.

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

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Imprisoned - Rev. Devon Herrell

Sharing of our Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer & The 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

from "A Child's Book of Hymns"

❖ Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, all that we are and all that we have comes from you. Take these gifts and these people and make them blessings for your people in this community and beyond. Amen.

Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Great Thanksgiving

Leader: Let us pray:

People: Loving God, we thank you that you are as close to us as breath, that your love is constant and unfailing. We thank you for all that sustains life, and especially for Jesus Christ, who teaches us how to live out an ethic of justice and peace, and for the promise of transformation made manifest in his life, death resurrection.

We ask you to bless this bread and this cup. Through this meal, make us the body of Christ, that we may join with you in promoting the well-being of all creation. Amen.

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer after Communion

Leader: Let us pray -

People: We give thanks, loving God, that you have refreshed us at your table. Strengthen our faith; increase our love for one another. As we have been fed by the seed that became grain, and then became bread, may we go out into the world to plant seeds of justice, transformation, and hope. Amen.

Hymn #289

O God of Every Nation, tune: Llangloffan

Benediction

Postlude

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God, by Hugh Livingston



The altar flowers today are given by Jim and Alice Bandstra

In honor of Simon Bandstra's graduation from Lake Travis High School in Austin, TX.



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.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

"The Beauty Still Remains" presented by Voca Lyrica, featuring the moving choral work, "Anne Frank: A Living Voice," is this afternoon at 4:00 pm in the Big Rapids High School Auditorium.

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 cereal as the "food of the month" for June. With the demand, any non-perishable food item is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued, generous support.

Our next book study date is Tuesday, June 10 at 7:00 pm in the Parlor. We are reading "*A Year of Biblical Womanhood*," by Rachel Held Evans. You are welcome to join in the discussion even if you didn't attend the first session in May.

The Meijer Simply Give program benefiting Project Starburst runs until June 28. The double match day is scheduled for June 14. You may purchase Simply Give cards at the local Meijer store or find them in the narthex. You may also give your donation directly to Diane Long at Project Starburst to turn in on the double match day.

Senior Enrichment Day is Wednesday, June 25. The event will be held at the Big Rapids High School. The seminar series offered this year includes a choice of more than 40 diverse educational sessions, providing a "one-stop-shop" for vital information for seniors. Registration materials are available in the narthex or found at locations throughout the county including RSVP offices and the Mecosta County Senior Center.

Blood Drive – The United Church will be hosting a Community Blood Drive on Wednesday, June 25 from 2:30 pm – 6:30 pm. If you would like to donate, see the poster on the bulletin board in the narthex or contact the church office.

Pride Big Rapids Festival – The United Church is proud to support the Pride Big Rapids Festival on June 29. We will not have a special booth/table this year, but church members are encouraged to attend and volunteer if you wish. To volunteer, you are asked to visit www.pridebigrapids.org/volunteer and fill out an application.

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. She is generally in the office on Thursdays from 9:00 am – 11:45 am. You may contact the church office to set up an appointment.

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


	Expenditures	Income
April 2025	\$ 4,361.95	\$ 15,420.29
Year-to-Date (Jan-April 2025)	\$74,805.53	\$101,484.60




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. Devon Herrell
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	Mike Rinehart
Liturgist	Sue Glatz
Ushers	Kay Achterhof, Chuck Achterhof, Don Stephen, Judy Tressler
Livestream Team	Amy Buse, Adam Jewell, Aleah Ritzema, Wayne McKay
Technical Advisors	Amy Buse & Paul Heidemann

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