

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Organist: Karen Cain
September 5, 2021

Pastor: Rev. Dana Schindler
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

.....
GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

Welcome to worship today at Immanuel United Church of Christ in Hamel, IL, where our mission is “Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

.....
We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us today. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here! Please leave a comment to let us know you are here. Also note any joys and concerns you may have and feel free to greet each other in Christian love.

Music used is covered under our CCLI livestreaming license # 4012842.

Today for our service, you will need your worship guide, communion elements, paper, and a pen.

PRELUDE

Karen Cain

POINTS TO PONDER

“Quiet birds rob the universe of beautiful symphonies.” — **Matshona Dhlwayo**

“The hills and mountains on your ways are going to be removed. But remember that’s what should happen when God gives you the shovel. Use your gifts; it’s the escape route!”— **Israelmore Ayivor, Daily Drive 365**

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

“This is the Day”

84 NCH

**This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made,
that the Lord has made;
we will rejoice,
we will rejoice and be glad in it,
and be glad in it.**

**This is the day that the Lord has made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.**

**This is the day,
this is the day that the Lord has made.**

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Gracious God, we thank you for the gifts you have given to us, demonstrating your deep love for each of us. Help us to appreciate your gifts and to use them to help others and ourselves. May we always worship you as we use those gifts. Amen.

OPENING HYMN*“For the Beauty of the Earth” # 28 NCH/ # 1 HFG**

For the beauty of the earth,
 for the glory of the skies,
 for the love which from our birth
 over and around us lies.

Refrain:

Christ, our Lord, to you we raise
 this, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour
 of the day and of the night,
 hill and vale and tree and flower,
 sun and moon and stars of light,

Refrain:

Christ, our Lord, to you we raise
 this, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
 brother, sister, parent, child,
 friends on earth, and friends above,
 for all gentle thoughts and mild,

Refrain:

Christ, our Lord, to you we raise
 this, our hymn of grateful praise.

For yourself, best gift divine,
 to the world so freely given,
 agent of God's grand design:
 peace on earth and joy in heaven.

Refrain:

Christ, our Lord, to you we raise
 this, our hymn of grateful praise.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Forgive us, Lord, when we fail to use the gifts we have been given. Help us to embrace your gifts that we might share them for the good of all. Open our eyes that we may see the gifts of others and accept them when offered. May we

always remember that **ALL gifts are perfect and meant to be used. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Forgiveness is another one of God's perfect gifts, simply waiting for us to claim. Accept God's forgiveness and learn. Amen.

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Do you like to get gifts? I think most of us do. A gift lets us know that someone is thinking about us and that makes us feel good. We usually receive gifts on our birthday or at Christmas. They might be big or small. They might be something we expect or a complete surprise.

I have a gift to show you today. What do you suppose it is?

Who do you think it is from?

Well, let's take a look. (Opens present).

Who do you think this present is from?

God gives us gifts. Sometimes we don't understand why God gives us the gifts we get, but we do know that God expects us to use them. How could I use THIS gift?

PRAYER Gracious God, thank you for every gift you give us. Help us to use them to help others see your love for them. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING James 1:17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. 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. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. 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. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

SERMON**Useful Gifts***Rev. Dana Schindler*

James tells us that all good, all *perfect* gifts are from God and that they are to be used to fulfill God's purpose. He also tells us that we are to be doers of the word, not hearers only, that faith without works is dead.

Three thoughts, with one purpose: we should use what we have to do what God wants us to do. We are to practice what we say we believe.

Some years ago there was a movie called *Legally Blonde*. Perhaps you saw it. The main character was Elle Woods. She was a beautiful blonde college girl who fit the stereotype of dumb blonde. She cared a great deal about hair, makeup, nails, gossip magazines and all of the other things that some people associate with beautiful, rich, blonde women. She also cared a great deal about her boyfriend, Warner. He was also an entitled rich kid. She fully expected him to propose to her and was devastated when he did not. He explained that he was expected to go to Harvard Law School and was expected to marry a serious woman. He had to break up with her.

Elle decided that she wasn't going to let him go, so she took the entrance exam for law school and applied to Harvard.

Elle was the only one who was not surprised that she was accepted. I doubt she had ever been turned down for anything in her life. She discovered that law school was a little more difficult than she expected, but she was willing to put in the work required to make it because she had a goal in mind.

She learned a great deal in law school that didn't necessarily have to do with law. She discovered that the prize she was seeking wasn't as great as she thought. She discovered that she was capable of doing far more than anyone expected. She learned that first impressions are not always accurate. And she learned that she had gifts she had not begun to use.

What about us? Do we have gifts we have not used? Are we capable of doing more than others believe we are? Do we allow other people to define us simply because of how we look, where we are from, who our family is, our income level, our gender, or something else?

Every so often someone tells me that I can't be a church pastor because I'm a woman. I tell them to "take it up with God, because God chooses who receives gifts for ministry, not humans." I was told in high school that I shouldn't make better grades in math and science because I was a girl. I said "watch me."

Has someone told you that you couldn't or shouldn't use a gift for some reason? Remember that other people should never define you. God has defined you and only God's opinion matters. James tells us that God's gifts are perfect and that we are supposed to use them for God's glory.

I am reminded of this poem, *Our Greatest Fear*, by Marianne Williamson:

“Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small does not serve the world. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

Are you using your gifts? If you aren't, ask yourself why. If you haven't discovered your gifts, come talk to me and we'll work on it. Sometimes people don't realize they have a gift, but everyone does. Don't be the quiet bird whose symphony is never heard. Let your light shine. Use your gifts for the glory of God. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Gracious God, we are filled with your good and perfect gifts. Help us to realize their full value and to use them wisely. Remind us that when obstacles stand in our way, you are there to help us dig our way out. Give us the courage to sing the symphonies that you have given us that we may glorify you. We offer special prayers this day for those who are ill in body and spirit. Comfort them and provide the healing they need. We pray for those who are traveling, that they may have safe journeys. We pray for our community and for the ability and willingness to meet it's needs. Our prayers are also with those suffering through war and natural disasters, that they may find the resources they need for survival. Lord, we pray for our church, its leaders, its members, and its pastor. Help us to work together to bring new life to our weary souls. And we pray for our country. Help us to learn how to talk to each other and work to solve our problems because political posturing will not save us from pandemic and injustice. Only loving our neighbor can do that.

All these things we pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying: **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, the power, the glory forever Amen.**

GIVING OUR GIFTS

What gifts do we have to give today to help spread God's love to others? How can we use God's gifts of time, talent, and treasure? Let us use our gifts to move our mountains and make way for God's kingdom. Offerings may be placed in the offering plates outside the sanctuary or mailed to Immanuel United Church of Christ at 5838 Staunton Road, Edwardsville, IL 62025.

HYMN OF THANKS**The Doxology****# 382 HFG**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow
 Praise God all creatures here below
 Praise God above ye heavenly hosts
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of Grace, bless these gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Help us to use them to glorify you and bring your kingdom to earth. Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN Break Now the Bread of Life #321 Chalice/ # 30 HFG

**Break now the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
 as once you broke the loaves beside the sea.
 Beyond the sacred page I seek you, Lord;
 my spirit waits for you, O living Word.**

**Bless your own word of truth, dear Lord, to me,
 as when you blessed the bread by Galilee.
 Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall;
 and I shall find my peace, my All in all!**

**You are the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
 your holy word the truth that rescues me.
 Give me to eat and live with you above;
 teach me to love your truth, for you are love.**

INVITATION

LEADER: Luke, the evangelist, wrote of our risen Savior, who at the table with two of the disciples took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognized the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.

PEOPLE: In company with all believers in every time and beyond time, we come to this table to know the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.

COMMUNION PRAYER

LEADER: God be with you.

PEOPLE: **And also with you.**

PASTOR: Lift up your hearts.

PEOPLE: **We lift them to God.**

PASTOR: Let us give thanks to God Most High.

PEOPLE: **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

PASTOR: Eternal God, who has created the heavens and the earth, giving breath to every living thing, we thank you for all the gifts of creation and for the gift of life itself. We thank you for making us in your own image, for forgiving us when we act as though you have no claim on us, and for keeping us in your steadfast care.

We rejoice in Jesus Christ, the only one eternally begotten by you, who was born of your servant Mary and shared the joys and sorrows of life as we know it.

We remember Christ's death, we celebrate Christ's resurrection, and, in the beloved community of your church, we await Christ's return at the end of history.

We take courage from the abiding presence of your Holy Spirit in our midst. We offer you our praise for women and men of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice. With all the prophets, martyrs, and saints, and all the company of heaven, we glorify you:

ALL: Holy, holy, holy God of love and majesty, the whole universe speaks of your glory, O God Most High. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Hosanna in the highest!

PASTOR: We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, Jesus took bread, gave you thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, Jesus also took the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." By eating this bread and drinking this cup, we proclaim Christ's death, celebrate Christ's resurrection, and await Christ's coming again.

PEOPLE: **Amen. Come, Christ Jesus!**

PASTOR: Gracious God, we ask you to bless this bread and cup and all of us with the outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Through this meal, make us the body of Christ, the church, your servant people, that we may be salt, and light, and leaven for the furtherance of your will in all the world.

PEOPLE: Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

All: Eternal God, you have called your people from east and west and north and south to feast at the table of Jesus Christ. We thank you for Christ's presence and for the spiritual food of Christ's body and blood. By the power of your Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to your will. Go with us to the streets, to our homes, and to our places of labor and leisure that whether we are gathered or scattered, we may be the servant church of the servant Christ, in whose name we rejoice to pray. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"Make Me a Blessing"

#473 HFG

**Out in the highways and byways of life,
Many are weary and sad;
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife,
Making the sorrowing glad.**

Refrain:

**Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing.
Out of my life may Jesus shine;
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray.
Make me a blessing to someone today.**

**Tell the sweet story of Christ and his love,
Tell of his pow'r to forgive;
Others will trust him if only you prove
True, ev'ry moment you live. [Refrain]**

**3 Give as 'twas given to you in your need,
Love as the Master loved you;
Be to the helpless a helper indeed,
Unto your mission be true. [Refrain]**

GOING FORTH TO SERVE As we go forth to serve, please remember our opportunities this week. Join us for:

PRAYER GROUP Wednesday morning at 10:00 am on Zoom as we pray for the health of our church and our friends, family, and community. We hope to hear God's will for us in this time and place.

FOUNDERS' DAY Sunday September 12 will be our first special Sunday of our Anniversary Celebration. Be sure to join us!

AHMA WALK FOR GOOD will be held September 11 from 9-Noon at Fireman Park in Alhambra. There is a choice of 3 walking trails that can be combined for a total of 1.9 miles or shorter walks of .5-.6 miles. Come join us for a fun walk!

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMBER

MAZZIO'S NIGHT September 13th from 5-9 pm, sponsored by the Vision Team. Proceeds will be used for outreach projects. Come join us for a great supper!

PPRC will meet September 16th at 7 pm.

FREE COMMUNITY CONCERT featuring The Wild HouseKats will be held Saturday, September 25th from 6-8 pm here at the church, outside if weather permits. There will be hotdogs, corn on the cob, and drinks for sale/donation. If you would like to hear a sample of this group's music, you can check out their Facebook page. Vision Team is sponsoring this event for community outreach. We hope that everyone will come to this kickoff for our 150th Anniversary Celebration.

OCTOBER

150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION will take place on Sunday, October 3rd. Conference Minister Rev. Shana Johnson will be preaching. Other details will be forthcoming. Please make plans to attend and to invite those who haven't been attending church.

QUARTERLY MEETING October 10th following worship.

LECLAIRE PARKFEST October 17th. The Vision Team will have a dessert tent to raise funds for outreach.

THE BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY in Hamel is open on Mondays from 9:00am till 10:30am. All who need assistance are welcome.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Pancake mix	Syrup	Sugar
Flour	Pie filling	Mashed potato mix
Tomato paste	Baked beans	Chef Boyardee Ravioli
Evaporated milk	Coffee	Bars of soap
Shampoo	Dish detergent	Laundry detergent
Empty egg cartons		

CONCERNS

Maria S.	Harry S.	Lillie H.
Kathie R.	Martha K.	Carole G.
Tomiko J.	Sherri R.	Sherri's Sister
Rose O.	Roger W.	Kathleen L.
Michelle L.	Kristy K.	Dorothy D.
Jane B.	Mary Ann C.	Jake G.
Diane B.	Jane	Maurice M.
Rich R.	Kyle T.	Wayne S.
Karen's Mother	Karen's Brother-in law	Our Church
Our Church Council	Hitz Home workers and residents	
Our country as we deal with pandemic		
Disaster Victims	Pastor Dana, as she leads	

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Ruth:	officeiucc@gomadison.com
Pastor Dana:	pastoriucc@gomadison.com

BENEDICTION

And now, until we meet again, may each one be held safely in the palm of God's hand. Amen.

POSTLUDE