



Rockville United Church

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)/United Church of Christ

9th Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2026 ~ Hybrid Workshop

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

PRELUDE

CELEBRATING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

GATHERING MUSIC

I Want Jesus to Walk With Me

American

*CALL TO WORSHIP

We come to listen anew to the parables of Jesus.

For they still challenge us to see our world in new and transformative ways.

They reveal what is hidden.

And bid us to think past the limits of our own imaginations.

Everywhere Jesus went, he told stories.

Through them, he shared God's vision of a world free of vicious cycles of poverty, fear, and scarcity.

Jesus healed, transformed, and empowered God's people with new visions of the abundant life.

Jesus preached a gospel characterized by grace, gratitude, and generosity.

We gather to listen for the wisdom in Jesus' stories.

As we listen with open eyes, fresh ears and open hearts.

*HYMN

All Things Bright and Beautiful

Chalice Hymnal No. 61

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
in love God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colors,
and made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountain,
the river running by,
the sunset, and the morning
that brightens up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,
the pleasant summer sun,
the ripe fruits in the garden,
God made them every one.

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION (unison)

Most generous and gracious God, we come to you this day to hear ancient wisdom in our modern times, and lessons for our living. Lead us through the struggles of not knowing, of wrestling for truth in the parables, for we know that 'not knowing' opens us up again and again to questions that will lead us back to your wisdom. Such wisdom always reveals that true spiritual power is held in the hands of those who trust in your abundance. We acknowledge that our abundance and the poverty of others need to be brought into a new balance. Our fears about scarcity and want, both physical and spiritual, scare us and shrivel our imaginations. A belief in scarcity makes us greedy, anxious, and driven. It keeps us from enjoying the more abundant life in fellowship, relationship, and communion with others that you have promised us. Be with us, send us light, and help us revel in your abundance as a gift of grace. Amen.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

CHORAL RESPONSE

Seven-fold Amen

Reid

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 55:10-13

NRSV

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle, and it shall be to the Holy One for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

One: Listen to what the Spirit is teaching.

All: Thanks be to God.

WORD FOR CHILDREN

Pastor Jennifer

Nursery care for infants through age 3 is available in the nursery on the lower level.

Our nursery caregiver is Caitlin Vrendenburg. Our nursery helper is Donna Lalley.

Older children are encouraged to remain in worship. The rug space in the sanctuary is available for quiet play, coloring and reading.

ANTHEM

Honey in the Rock

Georgia Sea Island Song

SCRIPTURE**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

NRSV

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. If you have ears, hear!" "Hear, then, the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

One: This is the word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**Bind Us Together**

Gillman

SERMON **The Gospel, the Watermelon, and the Parable of the Sower** Dr. Suzanne Junod

HYMN**We Cannot Own the Sunlight Sky***

Chalice Hymnal No. 684

We cannot own the sunlit sky, the moon, the wild-flow'rs growing,
for we are part of all that is within life's river flowing.

With open hands receive and share the gifts of God's creation,
that all may have abundant life in ev'ry earthly nation.

God calls humanity to join as partners in creating
a future free from want and fear, life's goodness celebrating.
That new world beckons from afar, invites our shared endeavor,
that all may have abundant life and peace endure forever.

MORNING PRAYER**PRAYERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

Refrain: One: Holy One, in your mercy,

All: *Receive our prayers.*

THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TEACHES

Interpretation by Phyllis N. Windle

Sacred Beauty, Holy Wisdom, In-dwelling Spirit,
awaken us to the healing and ripening within.
Help us to truly be ourselves,
accepted and loved as we were, are, and will be.
Here and now, may we share your love ever more widely,
and show it to our beloved creation.
Grant everyone “bread” for tomorrow –
be it barley or maize, oat or rice,
rye, spelt, sorghum, or wheat.
You give us abundance. Forgive our greed and
embolden our generosity.
Amen.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

OFFERTORY

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

Bountiful God, we are grateful for the many blessings we have received. Use these gifts to touch the lives of those in need because we recognize in Jesus a new economist in our lives. By sowing seeds far and wide, not knowing where they may land, but trusting in the abundance of the harvest, we widen our horizons. Grant us courage and resilience, for we know that in hardship there is growth and a plant not challenged by wind grows spindly. Strengthen us, therefore, to be your hands and heart in this work, always seeking out, enjoying and sharing the evidence of your abundance in our lives with others. Amen.

*HYMN

For Everyone Born, A Place at the Table

SWMN No. 105

For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead, (refrain)

For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong, (refrain)

For everyone born, a place at the table,
to live without fear, and simply to be,
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
for everyone born, the right to be free. (refrain)

Refrain:

And God will delight when we are creators of
justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes, God will delight when
we are creators of justice,
justice and joy!

***BENEDICTION**

A Sower went out to sow.

God is not in imaginary places, but in ordinary places. So let us first sow seeds of discovery and open our eyes wide to possibilities.

A Sower went out to sow.

God is in gardens, so let us sow resilient plants with perennial seeds.

A Sower went out to sow.

God is in the weeds, so let us look through them admiring their fortitude as we continue to sow seeds of kindness and appreciation.

A Sower went out to sow, guiding the laborers through God's Spirit and love.

God is in our midst, so let us go in strength and hope to share the love of God.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

Thanks to our worship helpers today!

Liturgist: Paul Clark

Digital Host: Beth Marshwood

Welcome Table: Tida Strey

Greeter: Carol and John Abrahams



REGISTRATION IS OPEN!
September 11-13, 2026 at Camp Pecometh

It is time to mark your calendars for Camp Pecometh – RUC’s intergeneration camp on the Chester River. Plan to join RUC for a weekend of fun, worship and time together. Join RUC for this over 25-year tradition.

Deposits are due August 16. Final payments are due **September 1**. [Register here!](#)

CABINS: Individual: \$125 each, family of three: \$375, additional family members: \$50 each

RETREAT CENTER: There are 24 hotel-style rooms in the retreat center. \$400 double occupancy, additional family members: \$50 each

PAY IT FORWARD: You may make an extra donation to the Camp Pecometh Scholarship Fund to enable all who want to attend Camp Pecometh by adding an extra little something to your payment, and a note it is to “Pay it Forward!” (There is a memo line in the online donation form to do this.) Thank you!

For more information, or to discuss accommodations, please call Denise Rozell at (301) 787-6814.

Welcome to Rockville United Church!

We are glad you have joined us for worship this morning. We trust that you will find RUC to be a welcoming and engaging place to explore the life of faith within a community that honors each person's spiritual journey. We encourage you to ask questions, visit our website, and share your contact information at the welcome table near the front doors.

I hope to greet you personally following worship, and invite you to contact me.

Blessings,

Rev. Jennifer Knutsen

jennifer@rockvilleunitedchurch.org

Our complimentary Wi-Fi network is **RUC Mesh**. The password is **heavenly**.



Please Scan Me To Give To RUC.

RUC Staff

Rev. Jennifer R. Knutsen, Senior Pastor

Rev. Guy S. Johnson, Associate Pastor

Jim Levy, Director of Music

Dalia Marciano, Administrative Coordinator

Cha'Mia Holloman, Communications Coordinator

Caitlin Vrendenburg, Nursery Coordinator

Juan Mendez, Sexton



Rockville United Church

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)/United Church of Christ

355 Linthicum Street, Rockville, Maryland 20851

301-424-6733 ~ www.RockvilleUnitedChurch.org

(Office Hours: Wed, Fri—10am to 3pm or by appointment)

Ecumenical † Just Peace † Open & Affirming † More Light