



Sundays in Ordinary Time

Offering Invitations

May 18 through November 23, 2008

Green is the color of Ordinary Time in the life of the church, and the color of nature during its season of growth. The Offering is a time of joyful celebration of God's marvelous gifts, including the green earth and the home and nourishment it provides. In the Offering, we respond to God's generosity with our own gifts so that the ministry carried on in God's name will grow and thrive. (Note: joyful music will lift the "feel" of the offering time.)

Sunday, May 18 **Trinity Sunday**

The first words of the Bible are about God's own generosity. God gave us the gifts of a beautiful creation, our home, the good green earth and the animals that live here with us. On this spring morning, we come together to thank God and to offer our gifts so that the ministry of this church will continue to grow and be a blessing to the world. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, May 25 **8th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

"Consider the lilies...look at the birds of the air": Jesus pulls our attention away from our worries about scarcity, and turns our gaze toward the beautiful gifts of God's creation, signs of abundance and grace surrounding us always. Trust may be difficult for us, as it was for those early disciples, yet we bring our gifts this morning with the assurance of God's care for us every morning of our lives. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, June 1 **9th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

The story of Noah and the Ark ends with hope and new life. The story of God's care for the "living things" on that fragile little boat promises that they will "abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, God's love has always been abundant, in every age. We are grateful to a generous and loving God for every sign of new life. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, June 8 **10th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Jesus draws us from the margins into a great feast; he draws us out of a crowd, to healing; he draws us from death to new life. Each day, God finds the way that we need to be loved and challenged, and then calls us to minister to others in warm hospitality, healing mercies, and the promise of resurrection and new life. We respond to this marvelous call through our giving this day. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, June 15 **11th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Jesus felt tender compassion for the suffering people he met. He realized that many workers would be needed for a great harvest of mercy and love. This day you and I are called to this work for the reign of God. This very day you and I are called to a sweet labor of generosity, healing, and peace. Let us bring our gifts, then, so that the ministry of this church will be a growing, vibrant witness to God's love. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, June 22**12th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

God tells us over and over in the Bible not to be afraid. Our gifts this morning are one way that we trust God even in a world that keeps telling us to be afraid. We let go of thinking that we are on our own, and live each day in graceful dependence on God. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, June 29**13th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Hospitality – a warm welcome – is generosity. When we welcome each child of God into the life of this church, we extend God’s own generous hospitality. Our gifts help this graceful ministry to flourish and to grow and to give glory to God. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, July 6**14th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

The God of heaven and earth, of all of creation, holds each one of us in tender love and care. God is gracious and good, and no one is insignificant in God’s eyes. So we respond to everything God is doing in the life of the world by offering a portion of what we have generously received from a loving God. In the ministry of [this] United Church of Christ, we reach out to all of God’s children in tender love and care. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, July 13**15th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Jesus draws a picture of the good green earth and the seeds that rise up in a rich, abundant harvest when he speaks about God’s Word of grace and generosity. God’s Word finds fertile ground each time we share the gifts we’ve received, in every moment and every place of our lives. The gifts we offer this morning in this service will feed those who come to this church hungry for God’s love. We will offer a warm welcome that spills over into the world that God loves, reaching those far beyond these walls. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, July 20**16th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

We live in an “already-but-not-yet” time. We look around and see the healthy green crops of justice and peace struggling to grow, mixed in with the weeds of violence and suffering and war. We wait like the farmer for the bountiful harvest of God’s reign, and in the meantime, we’re working hard to nurture every little green shoot of hope. These gifts today are one way we tend the garden, this beautiful green garden of God, staking our hope on the future yield promised by God. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, July 27**17th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

There is hardly a more beautiful way to speak about the hidden promise of even the smallest gift than the image of the mustard seed, so tiny yet holding so much possibility. We are gifts of God: perhaps we feel small, but we hold the promise of God’s awesome power at work within us. The future may surprise us as much as it will surprise those who are watching us. We share our gifts, now, so we can build a home for those who come here seeking refuge, acceptance, and love. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, August 3 **18th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

God's beautiful creation overflows with water, sunlight, and the rich, dark soil to grow our food. When we share the fruits of this earth, there is more than enough for all: there is a table of plenty set by a God who loves every one of us. At this table, all are fed and still there are gifts overflowing into the world God loves. Our giving supports this ministry that God is growing stronger each day. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, August 10 **19th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Even the smallest inclination toward generosity saved Joseph's life, when his brother Reuben talked the others into sparing him for the moment. Out of that small generosity, God brought great and mighty results. Out of our gifts, no matter how small, God yields an abundant harvest of joy and hope for each person touched by the ministry of this church. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, August 17 **20th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

In the midst of famine, Joseph shared generously with his brothers, giving them not just food but an amazing forgiveness. You and I have received so much from God: food for our bodies and forgiveness to heal our spirits and our lives. We come to this moment in our worship when we give back to God a portion of what we've received, to express our own amazement at everything God is doing in our lives. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, August 24 **21st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

From generation to generation, we tell the story of the people of Israel long ago, held captive and threatened by Pharaoh. Yet God blessed them with an abundance of children, including the great Moses who would one day lead them to freedom. First, however, two nameless women worked courageously with God to protect those babies from Pharaoh's command. God provides in every age, in every generation, and in our own day we give back a portion of what God has given us so that we might work with God through the ministry of this church. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, August 31 **22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Moses must have felt small and powerless in the face of God's instructions to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt. Yet God moved Moses to courage and great things because Moses trusted God with his life. When we share what we have and trust God with our lives, great things will happen, here in our church and far beyond these walls. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, September 7 **23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Our ancestors in faith gathered together long ago to remember, to be restored, to be renewed. They shared their story, prayed together, and made an offering to God as they prepared to set out on the long journey to freedom in the Promised Land. Today we gather to remember and to pray together, to be restored and renewed, and we bring our own offerings so the ministry of this church will continue to participate in the saving works of God. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, September 14 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Like the people of Israel long ago, the children of God long for freedom in every age. We long for freedom from injustice and brokenness; we long for freedom from everything that holds us back from God and the new life God promises. That is what the ministry of this church is about: walking with God on our long journey, remembering God's goodness each step of the way, feeling God's presence with us. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, September 21 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

God's blessings rain down upon us like manna from heaven. Sometimes we recognize them as blessings, and sometimes we don't. But God's presence is with us in either case. Today we pause on this journey to remember the many times God has been with us along the way, and has provided for our needs. Then, through the ministry of this church, we join in the work of God in providing for the needs of the world. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, September 28 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

God is always with us, not just when everything seems clear and times are good, but also when we struggle with questions and doubt. When we cry out to God, our prayers are heard. When the world cries out to God, we are part of God's answer, offering water in the desert, offering nourishment to a world that is spiritually hungry. Our gifts this morning are our answer to God's own goodness. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, October 5 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

While the people of God wandered in the desert, God provided manna from heaven, water from a rock, and a law to guide their way and to shape their life together. God has fed us, too, and stayed with us every moment of our own journey so that we are never alone. We are here today to be fed, and to gather strength in numbers and in the Spirit of God, so we can reach out in ministry to the world God loves. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, October 12 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Look around us today, at this gathering. We are a community of people who want to follow Jesus. We share so much with those early Christians who "struggled in the work of the gospel" but also found joy in the Lord, joy in the life they shared together. No matter what we are carrying this morning, or what we face, we are not alone. At this moment in our worship, we're invited to share what we have so that others will find the same welcome, and the same joy that we have known. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, October 19 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

We are living, breathing messages of God's love for the world. This is our work of faith and our labor of love and our steadfastness of hope in Jesus Christ. Like the earliest Christians, we are here in this place because of the commitment and faith and generosity of others who shared the good news of the gospel in their time. So we turn now, in our time, and share our faith and our commitment through generous giving to support the ministry of this church in Christ's name. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, October 26 **30th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

All the rules and laws of our faith can be summed up in the law of love for God and one another. Everything “hangs” on that – the law of love. We don’t just talk about love here at [this] United Church of Christ; we bring it to life in ministry: we offer hospitality, we build community, we act in compassion, we do justice work, and in all these things we worship and love God, and we offer our love to our neighbor. That is what this ministry, and our gifts, are about, and all of it hangs on love. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, November 2 **31st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Practicing what we teach: the words and worship here in church are beautiful, but God cares just as much about what we do in every other hour of the week, and about what happens here at [this] United Church of Christ throughout the week. We are partners with God and with one another in this marvelous ministry, and our giving is one way that we practice what we teach: generosity and joy. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, November 9 **32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

There’s a difference between planning and preparation. We can’t plan the future that God holds, but we can prepare for each day by practices of generosity. Generosity helps us to forgive and to heal; it helps us to make peace in the world; it helps to bring justice and mercy to those in need. Our gifts this morning are one way we prepare for God’s coming into the world in the most unexpected ways. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, November 16 **33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

God’s wisdom turns the wisdom of the world upside down. God calls us to unexpected and extravagant opportunities to grow in our gifts and in our faith. Holding things close in fear distracts us from the path of discipleship, but trusting in God and in God’s future leads us to great generosity and joy. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

Sunday, November 23 **Reign of Christ Sunday**

What are we about here at [this] United Church of Christ? Jesus has told us what he is all about: compassion. That will be the final word, when all things come to fulfillment: compassion. Jesus summed up all the laws in a law of love for God and our neighbor. In our ministry here at [this] church, we see Jesus in each child of God, in every person, and we seek to serve their needs. That is why we bring our gifts this morning. *Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise.*

These **Offering Invitations** were written by the Rev. Kathryn Matthews Huey, Minister for Covenantal Stewardship, Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry Team in Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ.



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