

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 22, 2025

United Church of Christ - Neillsville

Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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PRELUDE *"Gloria"* W.A. Mozart
Deon Spangler

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We often feel as if we are wandering through our lives, searching for something we cannot name. We come today to listen for hope, to pray for strength, and to experience God's love.

Speak to us of faith, hope, and love, O Lord.

As the deer longs for flowing water in the wilderness, we long to drink deeply of God's promise for us. Knowing God is here, we join together on our journey.

Lead us to your still waters, O Lord.

Imprisoned by rules of our own making, we come to remember and claim our faith. Assured by the vision of Christ, whose sacrifice leads us to heaven, we come in fellowship with one another.

Clothe us in the love of Christ, O Lord.

With shouts of praise and songs of thanksgiving, we come to celebrate the God of hope, the Spirit of peace, and the Christ of redeeming love.

We come to pray.

We come to sing.

We come to worship and praise.

OPENING PRAYER

HYMN *"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"*
Rusty Edwards

**1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
with a liberating light;
Praise the One who frees the prisoners,
turning blindness into sight.**

**Praise the One who preached the gospel,
healing every dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands
with the very bread of peace.**

**2 Praise the One who blessed the children
with a strong yet gentle word;
Praise the One who drove out demons
with a piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water
to the desert's burning sand;
from this well comes living water
quenching thirst in every land.**

**3 Praise the one true love incarnate:
Christ, who suffered in our place;
Jesus died and rose for many
that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
seeing what our God has done.
Praise the one redeeming glory;
praise the One who makes us one.**

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

Lord of the ages, in our busy lives, we do not always make time to love, to pray, or to sing your praises. We want to be strong, yet we often feel out of control: buffeted by the winds of change, rocked by the earthquakes in our relationships, burned by the fires of doubt. Forgetting what we cannot see, we ask, "Why have you forgotten me?" Help us trust your presence, even when we feel utterly alone, trapped in our dark night of the soul. With the promise of Christ as our hope, lead us from our own wilderness wanderings into the well-tended garden of your love.

WORDS OF GRACE

PASSING OF THE PEACE

As forgiven and blessed children of God, let us share with one another signs of peace and love.

One: The Peace of God be with you.
Many: **And also with you.**

All are invited to greet one another with words such as *"The peace of Christ be with you,"* and the response: *"And also with you"*.

RESPONSE: *"Where the Spirit of the Lord Is"*

**Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is peace.
Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is love.
There is comfort in life's darkest hour,
There is light and life, there is help and power
In the Spirit, in the Spirit of the Lord.**

CHILDREN'S TIME

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT 1 Kings 19:1-15a

¹ When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. ² So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them."

³ Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. ⁴ Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."

⁵ Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" ⁶ He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

⁷ Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you."

⁸ So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.

But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

¹¹ "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied again, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

¹⁵ Then the Lord told him, "Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus.

NEW TESTAMENT Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed.

²⁴ Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. ²⁵ And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

HYMN "For Freedom, Christ Has Set Us Free"

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TUNE: ELLACOMBE ("I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

1 "For freedom, Christ has set us free!"

What joy is ours to claim!

No more enslaved, humanity

Finds life in Jesus' name.

We try, Lord, to be justified

Through all the works we do.

Yet you adopt us, saying, "Child,

It's Christ who makes you new."

2 We're clothed in Christ and we belong;

Now no one waits outside.

In him we find our common song;

Old ways no more divide.

"It is no longer I who live,

But Christ who lives in me."

He died for us, new life to give —

And new identity.

3 Now, Spirit-filled, may we be led

From ways that would destroy.

May we your people turn instead

To lives of love and joy.

May we find peace that makes us whole

And patience everywhere.

God, give us kindness, self-control,

And hearts and hands that share.

NEW TESTAMENT Luke 8:26-39

²⁶So they arrived in the region of the Gerasenes, across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷As Jesus was climbing out of the boat, a man who was possessed by demons came out to meet him. For a long time he had been homeless and naked, living in the tombs outside the town.

²⁸As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down in front of him. Then he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹For Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. This spirit had often taken control of the man. Even when he was placed under guard and put in chains and shackles, he simply broke them and rushed out into the wilderness, completely under the demon's power.

³⁰Jesus demanded, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, for he was filled with many demons. ³¹The demons kept begging Jesus not to send them into the bottomless pit.

³²There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby, and the demons begged him to let them enter into the pigs.

So Jesus gave them permission. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned.

³⁴When the herdsmen saw it, they fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. ³⁵People rushed out to see what had happened. A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been freed from the demons. He was sitting at Jesus' feet, fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid. ³⁶Then those who had seen what happened told the others how the demon-possessed man had been healed. ³⁷And all the people in the region of the Gerasenes begged Jesus to go away and leave them alone, for a great wave of fear swept over them.

So Jesus returned to the boat and left, crossing back to the other side of the lake. ³⁸The man who had been freed from the demons begged to go with him. But Jesus sent him home, saying, ³⁹"No, go back to your family, and tell them everything God has done for you." So he went all through the town proclaiming the great things Jesus had done for him.

SERMON "Breaking Chains" Pastor Julie

HYMN "Help Us Accept Each Other" Fred Kaan
#388 NCH (vs. 1, 2, 4)

**1 Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, God, among us,
and bring us to believe
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.**

**2 Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.**

Teach us to care for people,
for all, not just for some,
to love them as we find them,
or as they may become.

4 God, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for righteousness and bread,
Bring us new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
God! Free us, make us one!

MORNING PRAYERS

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

THE OFFERING SERVICE

Invitation to Generosity

Offertory "Prayer" W.A. Mozart

Doxology

Praise God, the Source of life and birth;
Praise God, the Word, who came to earth;
Praise God, the Spirit, holy flame;
All glory, honor to God's name!

Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, who made us who we are, we offer all of ourselves to You. Take our talents, our energy and our joy, and use us to share Your love. Take our mistakes, our regrets and our pain, and use us to bring Your healing. Magnify the gifts we offer before You today, to spread Your peace in the world. Amen.

HYMN "What a Covenant"

#471 NCH vs. 1-2 Elisha A. Hoffman

1 What a covenant, what a joy divine,
leaning on the everlasting arms.
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

Refrain:

Leaning, leaning,
safe and secure from all alarms;
leaning, leaning,
leaning on the everlasting arms.

2 Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
leaning on the everlasting arms.
Oh, how bright the path grows from day to day,
leaning on the everlasting arms. [Refrain]

JOYS AND CONCERNS

HYMN "What a Covenant" #471 NCH (vs. 3)

3 What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
leaning on the everlasting arms. [Refrain]

COMMISSIONING (All)

Be the church:

Protect the environment

Care for the poor

Forgive often

Reject racism

Fight for the powerless

Share earthly and spiritual resources

Embrace diversity

Love God

Enjoy this life!

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Deon Spangler



**ANNOUNCEMENTS
RADIO BROADCAST**

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast
on WCCN 98.5FM and 1370AM**

This week's radio broadcast is
sponsored by Susan Smigelski and family
in memory of Eileen Zank.

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
We are glad that you have joined us on site,
through the internet or on the radio.
We pray that you will hear God's call,
seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube link for Sunday, June 22, 2025
<https://youtube.com/live/7iwVY5q00Vg>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, June 22nd

- **9:30 AM Worship** Deacon Host – ~~Wayne Voss~~
Greeter(s) Steve & Leslie Buchholz
Usher(s) – Paul Vine, Kelley Burch
PowerPoint – Barb Petkovsek

Monday, June 23rd

- **9 AM Future Connections Meeting**
- **5:30 PM Council Meeting**

Tuesday, June 24th

- **1 PM Bible Study**

**Coffee fellowship after worship -
Sign up on back bulletin board**

June 22 – Deb P, Bonnie W, Jerry H
June 29 – Sharon Buddenhagen
July 6 –
July 13 – Marla Raine
July 20 -
We need people to sign up



“Return
to your **home,**
and **declare** how
much **God** has
done **for you.”**

Luke 8:39