

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Joint Service – 9 AM, September 20, 2026
at Calvary Lutheran Church
with United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Worship Leaders – Barb Krug, SAM and Pastor Julie Ruegsegger, UCC
River's Grace Praise Band

PRELUDE *Hallelujah Feeling, Old Church Choir, House of the Lord - River's Grace Praise Band*

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

ONE: Calling all children of the Living God: the gospel is good news for every age and every stage.

ALL: Let us worship together, the young and the old.

ONE: The good news is proclaimed in God's words, and also with crayons, silly songs, snacks, and rest time.

ALL: Let us worship together, every generation.

ONE: We come together with different abilities and disabilities, learning in a rainbow of ways and styles.

ALL: Let us worship together, with our family of faith.

ONE: All are welcome in the arms of Christ who proclaimed, "Let the children come!"

ALL: Let us worship together, united in our eternal hope.

GATHERING SONG

"Come, Now is the Time to Worship"

GREETING

Leader: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

People: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

ONE: God our teacher, who helps us to understand the world around us,

ALL: Thank you for the privilege of education. You have blessed our communities with teachers who take new skills and concepts and pass them along to each new class of young people.

ONE: God who came as a child to show us how to be fully human, to show us how to be children of God,

ALL: You have given our children minds that grow and develop in unique ways, at unique speeds, and we are astounded by that miracle.

ONE: You speak to us through the words, actions, play, and feelings of children. You call us to listen to the Spirit speaking through our young siblings in Christ.

ALL: We celebrate the beginning of this school year and ask for your blessings upon the children, the educators, and the families who support them all.

ONE: But in this celebration of education and learning, we do not forget there are children and families and teachers who do not have the resources they need. When systems are unjust, the outcomes are unacceptable.

ALL: Today, we remember those who are beginning school this year: those who have what they need to learn and grow in safety, and those who lack supplies, teachers, safe buildings, and accommodations for all needs and abilities.

ONE: We come to worship together, to lift up our young people and all those who care for them and teach them.

ALL: Open our hearts to what you are saying to us today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS **First Reading: Jonah 3:10—4:11**

After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?

¹⁰When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it.

^{4:1} But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning, for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. ³ And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵ Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶ The Lord God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰ Then the Lord said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"

CHILDREN'S SERMON

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

Sharing the Blessing

Prayer

COMMISSIONING OF EDUCATORS

The Vows

Do you promise, by the grace of God, to give yourselves to this calling with diligence, energy, and love, and to be guided by the Spirit and the Word of God?

Educators' Response:

We do, by the grace of God.

Let us acknowledge the gifts and callings of these faithful followers of Christ.

Congregation (unison):

We receive you as servants of Christ;

we pledge to support you in your service.

We encourage you with works and prayers.

We consider ourselves coworkers with you in the service of Christ.

The Charge

Prayer (unison):

Spirit of the living God, in every age you have appointed teachers to tell of your power, justice, and love. We thank you for faithful followers who are committed to teaching us your ways and your words. We give thanks for the evidence of your Holy Spirit that we and our children experience in the community of learning. We commend ourselves and our siblings in Christ to your constant love and guidance. Fill each one with grace and grant them the strength and peace of your Spirit. In the name of Christ, our Master, Servant, and Friend. Amen.

Holy Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

Leader: "The Holy Gospel according to Matthew"

People: **Glory to you, O lord.**

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹ "The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. ⁵ When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. ⁶ And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' ⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' ⁹ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, ¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' ¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

L: This is the Gospel of our Lord

People: Praise to you, O Christ.

MESSAGE

Barb Krug

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY

***Each church will receive their offering envelopes to their own church following the service. Any loose offering or undesignated offering will be donated to the JAM program.*

SONG OF THE DAY

"Good, Good Father" River's Grace Band

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Leader: Please join me in our offering prayer. God of creation,

People: you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly. All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have. Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

ONE: Gracious God, with you, every transition and new start is a reminder of your goodness, for you are always creating fresh, amazing things in us and through us. We appreciate the opportunity to learn and grow, knowing it is one of the biggest privileges we have. With thanks and love, we now offer everything we are to you, asking for your blessing.

ONE: We pray as and for students of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. We pray for our hearts and all they hold—excitement and nervousness, disappointment and hope. We give you all our loves and fears. We pray for steady self-esteem and deepening resilience.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for our minds, that they will expand in wonder and celebration, learning not just from the books studied but the people beside us. Open our minds with a willingness to be changed in unexpected ways, and settle our thought loops in peaceful places.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for our hands, that they will reach out to help welcome and care. Bless our hands with patience and dedication as they grip pencils and type

on keyboards, swish paint brushes and clap in song, grip monkey bars and lunch box handles, spin wheelchair tires and basketballs.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for our mouths, that they will speak words bringing life and connection. Help us use our mouths to honor the dignity and belovedness of all. Remind us to open our mouths for deep belly breaths when we're feeling anxious or afraid.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for our feet, that they will move toward those different from us and help others in safe ways. Plant our feet next to those who feel alone, and bless our steps down hallways and sidewalks. We know you are with us wherever our feet go or stay.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for our eyes, that they may see ourselves and others with compassion. Point our eyes toward those who are forgotten or struggling. Grow us in flexibility to see from all kinds of angles. Bless what and how we see, whether we're looking at a screen, a whiteboard, or the beauty of a person's face. And help us see with the most important eyes—the eyes of the Spirit within us.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for our ears, that they will genuinely listen to all voices, especially those that haven't been listened to much. When things get noisy, help us listen extra carefully for your voice. Help us hear with the most important ears—the ears of the Spirit within us.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We say a special prayer for parents and guardians, as the start of a new school year is always another leap of faith. Wrap them with your reassuring love as they entrust their children and trust in you. When questions remain unanswered, and the realm of control is finite, bless them with peace and the promise you are right there with their child, whether heading to preschool or driving to college.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We also pray for teachers, staff and administrators. Bless these faithful servants with courage and confidence, knowing you are in their classroom with a steady hand on their shoulder. Give them peace, patience, and balance in the pressures they face, and bravery to build structures and systems which justly serve all your children. Give them delight in the young ones before them, and recognition of the sweet ways children are also teachers.

ALL: Loving God, hold us and our prayers.

ONE: We pray for health and wholeness, fun and growth, surprise and amazement, for this school year ahead, knowing you will hold us all the way through.

ALL: We thank you, God, and love you. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Invitation

Prayer

Ecumenical Lord's Prayer

Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Blessing

Sharing the Elements

"Build My Life" - River's Grace Band

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Sustaining God, with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life. By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world. Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love, following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

BLESSING “The Blessing”

River’s Grace and Congregation

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God,
Coat the year before us with miracles
of your mercy and strength, and help us appreciate
most of all the bedrock miracle of your presence with
us in every single ordinary, sacred moment.
Lead us this school year into life-giving rhythms of
grace and light, where our regular routines become
the framework for worship and blessing.
Amen.

SENDING SONG “Child of Love”

BENEDICTION

ONE: Children, families, and all who love them,
go out into the beautiful world that God has made!
May you be filled with lovingkindness for yourself and
everyone around you.
May the prayers of your faith community keep you
safe, healthy, and full of joy.

**ALL: Go and play! Go and learn! Go and love each
other! Thanks be to God!**

RADIO BROADCAST

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

This week’s radio broadcast is
sponsored by the family of Dale & Betty Opelt
in memory of their wedding anniversary.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, September 20th at Calvary
- 9:00 AM Joint Worship

Deacon – Barb Shoemaker
Greeters – Donita & Phil Follen
Ushers –Debbie & Mike Perkl
Power Point – not needed
AV – not needed

***FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint/AV
it is suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to
the church service to get the laptop turned on,
allow for any updates, get screen down and start
running the announcements).***

Following Sunday, September 27th

Deacon – Sally Sadowska
Greeters – Leslie & Steve Buchholz
Ushers – Jerry Hamm & Ray Weyer
Power Point – Brynn or Calvin Heck
AV – Stephanie Heck

Monday, September 21st
-9:00 AM Card Making

Tuesday, September 22nd
- 1:00 PM – Bible Study
-5:30 PM – Trustees Meeting

Wednesday, September 23rd
5:00 PM - Council Meeting

Coffee fellowship after worship -
Sign up on back bulletin board

Sept 20 – at Calvary
Sept 27 – Rodman’s
Oct 4 –
Oct 11 -
We need people to sign up

Saturday,
September 19th
12 NOON to 4 PM



Organizations and individuals
will be creating 12 "amazing chilis"
Your donation of \$8 (adult) or \$4 (child under 7)
will get you a bottomless cup of chili
PLUS a ticket to vote for your favorite chili!
(ALL proceeds will go to our local food pantry!)

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th
9:00 AM – Joint Worship at Calvary



**Meal
Giveaway**
UCC NEILLSVILLE
515 West Second Street
September 20, 2026
9:45 - 10:00 AM