

August 11, 2024, Celebration Service (8:50 AM)

Prelude

Gathering Song: Sunshine Gospel Singers: *Glorious Peace*

Welcome

Congregational Hymns

*Peace Let a River*

*Shall We Gather at the River*

*Peace Be Still*

Joys & Blessing of the Backpacks & Teacher Blessing

As we begin this new school year,  
we give thanks that God has given us the ability to learn many things in many ways.  
We learn in school, but we also learn in church, in our family,  
in our community and in the world.

(Congregational Response)

**Learning is a Gift from God.**

We ask God's blessing on this new school year,  
that it may be a time when we appreciate and fully use God's gift of learning.  
As a church, we thank you for our students who see the wonder of your world unfold before them.  
We thank you for teachers, staff, coaches, books  
and technology that help them explore those wonders.

We ask God to bless our schools, teachers, our classmates, our friends,  
our principals, counselors, coaches and librarians.  
We ask God to bless those who prepare our lunches,  
those who drive us to school, and those who keep our schools clean and safe.  
We ask God to bless our church small group leaders and mentors,  
our pastor, and our ministry leaders.

This year, our students will want popularity: they will want to fit in,  
and they will wish to be people other than themselves, the people you created them to be.  
Remind them, and us, that they are your children.

(Congregational Response)

**We are all made in God's image.  
We are all God's Children.**

During this year, our students, parents, and educators will get overwhelmed by tests, homework, and activities, and they will wonder how they will make it through. Grant them quiet confidence and calm, bear their stress with them, help them to ask for help when it gets to be too much.

Our students and educators will be measured and tested, and they will be asked to measure their worth in how well they perform in competition, the grades students make, and the friends they have. Comfort them in the knowledge that you have already found them to be good, made them worthy, and called them by name.

We hold in our hearts and prayers the parents and loved ones of our students, as the start of a new school year is always another leap of faith. Wrap them with your reassuring love and presence as they entrust their children to 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.

(Congregational Response)

**We give thanks to God for the gift of learning!**

Prayer & Blessing

Lord, bless our students with the possibilities held in new beginnings,  
and help them to know that when their student days are over,  
you will show them where to serve you further, using what they have learned  
to meet the challenges of this world.

Open all faculty and staff minds and hearts to each of their students  
and especially to the ones who will challenge them the most.

Help them remember, Lord, the stage of life their students are at:  
give them patience to help their students grow and insight to know the help  
they need. Help them to teach as you would, Lord: help them to be understanding, to know when  
they need to be firm, how to be gentle in all things,  
and to be patient until the last bell rings.

Bless all our ministry leaders, Small Group & ChristCare leaders, teachers, Stephen Ministers, and Confirmation mentors. Give them the calming words, listening ears, and open hearts to be there for their groups of children, youth, and adults.

Help them not grow tired or weary and to remember to lean on You in their time of need. Bless the parents with peace as they send their students,  
no matter the age, into the world to learn and grow.

Thank you for this community of faith and the way we hold our teachers,  
leaders, parents, students, and all school personnel in our prayers  
this upcoming school year. During this year, may we seek to learn more  
about you and how you work in and through all the world.

In Christ we pray, **Amen.**

Thanksgiving Prayer

Offertory: Celebration Choir: *Believe He loves You*

Doxology 94

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!  
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Call to Prayer *Where the Spirit of the Lord Is*

Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer Response *Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness*

†Prayer of Illumination

**Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit,  
that as the Scriptures are read and your Word is proclaimed,  
we may live with a consistent kindness and compassion for others. Amen.**

Scripture Ephesians 4:25-5:2

This is the Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks Be to God!**

Sermon

Invitation to Christ and the Church

Invitational Hymn *Hope of the World*

Receiving of New Members

(Congregational Response)

**We give thanks for all that God has already given you and we welcome you in Christian love. As members together with you at Christ United Methodist Church, we renew our covenant faithfully to participate in the ministries of the Church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Benediction

Benediction Response *Shall We Gather at the River*

Postlude