



Urbandale
United
Church of
Christ

God is still speaking

A Just Peace and Open and Affirming congregation

“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are invited and welcome here.”

September 13, 2020

10:00 a.m.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST HOMECOMING SUNDAY

PRELUDE

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- You may wish to have the bulletin to follow along.
- You can pull up the bulletin for this service by going to urbucc.org.
- If you want to take a moment to prepare your space for whatever helps you pray, meditate, or be mindful of God’s presence, please do that. Perhaps it is a candle or a cross.
- We will be asking you to jot some things down, which you may be able to do on the device you are using to watch this or get a pad of paper and pen/pencil.
- Later in the service we will read from the **Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 18**, so if you have a Bible handy you might want to get it and turn to that passage. We will be reading from the Inclusive Bible, so you can compare it with your translation.

GREETING

“Forgiveness is the answer to the child’s dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again, what is soiled is made clean again.”
Dag Hammarskjold, Swedish diplomat

CALLING OUR ATTENTION TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Have you seen what God has been doing? It certainly is a marvel. There have been lives saved and relationships restored. Have you seen what people are doing? Sometimes rising above division and polarization, sometimes giving in to being petty and mean. But we are always confronted with the need to forgive and the need to be forgiven. This is how we know that God is at work – when God’s children find it in their hearts to be what God created us to be. So use this time to discover again, that we cannot live in the world without hurting each other, so forgiveness must be our aim.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”
Beverly Zimmer & Steven Linn, Vocalists

arr. Lloyd Larson

TAKING STOCK OF OUR BLESSINGS AND RESOURCES

“Donate” tab at urbucc.org

The United Church of Christ is providing Disaster Relief funds to areas hard-hit by the storms of August 10. If you would like to know more, or contribute to the Disaster Relief fund, go to www.ucc.org.

Neighbors in Need Offering – help for our communities and our neighbors.

Jot down what you have that you can share with others, sidewalk messages, a sign in a window, a card or letter or e-mail, fabric for masks or toilet paper of which you may have more than enough.

Think about how you might reveal the Presence of the Holy to the world through the sharing of your gifts and resources that you have at your disposal.

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

Holy and Loving God, even as we must again watch an electronic screen instead of being together, we thank you for the tech savvy of those who make this possible. We are grateful for those who work to maintain the connections and systems that keep us in relationship. If we become frustrated when connections fail or our ability to operate devices escapes us, help us to be patient and forgiving. And if we have the ability to help others stay connected, help us to be generous with our time and knowledge. Thank you for people who stay at their jobs in check-out lines, clinics, hospitals and station houses. Thank you for neighbors who worry about us and family who insist on us staying safe. Open us to the possibilities that this time creates for us, to explore new and unused gifts. And if we are tempted to grouse about what life has dealt us, help us to be creative with what we have, so that others may see your love reflected in us. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 18:20-35 (The Inclusive Bible)

²¹Peter came up and asked Jesus, “When a sister or brother wrongs me, how many times must I forgive? Seven times?”

²²“No,” Jesus replied, “not seven times; I tell you seventy times seven. ²³And here’s why.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a ruler who decided to settle accounts with the royal officials.

²⁴When the audit was begun, one was brought in who owed tens of millions of dollars. ²⁵As the debtor had no way of paying, the ruler ordered this official to be sold, along with family and property, in payment of the debt.

²⁶“At this, the official bowed down in homage and said, ‘I beg your highness, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full!’ ²⁷Moved with pity, the ruler let the official go and wrote off the debt.

²⁸“Then that same official went out and met a colleague who owed the official twenty dollars. The official seized and throttled this debtor with the demand, ‘Pay back what you owe me!’

²⁹“The debtor dropped to the ground and began to plead, ‘Just give me time and I will pay you back in full!’ ³⁰But the official would hear none of it, and instead had the colleague put in debtor’s prison until the money was paid.

³¹“When the other officials saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and went to the ruler, reporting the entire incident. ³²The ruler sent for the official and said, ‘You worthless wretch! I cancelled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have dealt mercifully with your colleague, as I dealt with you?’ ³⁴Then in anger, the ruler handed the official over to be tortured until the debt had been paid in full.

³⁵“My Abba in heaven will treat you exactly the same way unless you truly forgive your sisters and brothers from your hearts.”

This passage is a good illustration of the reason for using great care in making language inclusive. At the beginning and end of this parable (not found in any other Gospel), the Greek word for “Brother” is used. It would be easy to use “person” or “anyone” in its place, but the word “brother” in the early church was also a designation for a fellow believer. The translator must use their best judgment as to what sense to convey that is most faithful to the original meaning. The translators of the Inclusive Bible have opted for “sister(s) and/or brother(s) to preserve the sense that this is a question and lesson for the members of the faith community for whom Matthew was writing, while expanding the imagery to include females.

MEDITATION

“What Do You Owe?”

Pastor David Sickelka

PASTORAL PRAYER

Take a moment now to check your own prayer list. Add the names that need to go on it, review the names of those for whom you have been praying. Has an answer or resolution come? If so, make gratitude known to others.

LORD’S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN

“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

Hymnal 23

BLESSING

POSTLUDE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

O God, our heavenly Father and Mother,
may your name be sacred to us.

May your realm become a reality for us.

May your desires be fulfilled among us as they are in your courts.

Give us today what we need for life.

And forgive us for our wrongs as we forgive those who wrong us.

Guide us in tempting situations and protect us from the power of evil.

For the realm that is coming, the power that is growing, and the
glory that is building, all belong to you forever. Amen.

“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

Hymnal 23

There’s a wideness in God’s mercy, like the wideness of the sea;
there’s a kindness in God’s justice, which is more than liberty.
There’s no place where earthly sorrows are more felt than in God’s heaven;
there’s no place where earthly failings have such kindly judgement given.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of our minds;
and the heart if the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful, we would gladly trust God’s word;
And our lives would show thanksgiving for the goodness of our God.

URBANDALE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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www.facebook.com/UrbandaleUCC

“We welcome into this community of faith, and affirm the participation in all aspects of church life, persons of every age, race, gender identity and expression, nationality, ability, and sexual orientation. We will continue our efforts toward inclusiveness, and stand against all forms of discrimination. We will empower ourselves, our children, and one another to be fully present in the world, living in Christ’s image and striving for justice and peace.”

Staff

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Church Office hours are Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

For pastoral care, please contact Pastor Dave at 276-0625 (church office), 720-6389 (cell) or david.sickelka@urbucc.org. Pastor Dave is off on Mondays but will still respond to emergencies if you call or text.