



Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost
September 27, 2026

Drawing the Circle Wider Worship Series
Who is My Neighbor? Grounding in Empathy

UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church Of Christ



Loving God. Loving Neighbor. Building Community.

You are invited to join in the liturgy **in bold type.**

Childcare is available from 9:45 for children in pre-k and under. Following the Message for All Ages, children through elementary school are invited to Godly Play Sunday School. Both groups currently take place in the 2nd floor of the East Wing. Following worship, all children return to the Assembly Room with the teachers.

Gathering Music

Jeremy Carlisle

Welcome

Rev. Katrina Forman

Series Introduction

Dr. Sharon Fennema

Practice 1: Breathing Together

***Call to Worship**

Leader: The ringing of a bell calls us to worship.

Assembly: The pounding of a drum calls us to dance.

Leader: The clapping of hands calls us to celebration.

Assembly: What is the sound that calls us toward one another?

Leader: Listen...Breathe...Open your hearts and listen...God is dwelling here.

Listen deeply...Breathe...

The beating of our own hearts calls us to ourselves;

Calls us to be our true selves;

Assembly: Calls us to be our best selves;

Leader: Calls us to offer our gifts freely and unreservedly;

Assembly: Calls us to be what we might become.

Leader: Listen deeply...Breathe...

The breath of our neighbor calls us outside ourselves;

Calls us to be companions;

Assembly: Calls us to solidarity;

Leader: Calls us to be co-conspirators;

Assembly: Calls us to receive what is offered to us in love.

Leader: Listen. Heed the call of your own heart,
where love and truth, caring and peace, are born.

**Assembly: Listen. Heed the call of others,
where justice and solidarity,
compassion and equity are nourished.**

Leader: These sounds, these breaths, call us together
that we may do the work we cannot do alone.

**Assembly: We listen. We breathe.
We open our hearts. God is dwelling here.**

*Opening Hymn – I Am Here in the Heart of God

Words & Music: Chanda Rule

*I am here in the (heart/breath/soul/mind) of God, God is here in the (heart) of me.
Like the (wave/wind/flame/earth) in the (water/springtime/fire/body)
and the (water) in the (wave),
I am here in the (heart) of God.*

Practice 2: Vulnerability and Accountability

Prayers of Transformation

1. In one sentence, what is a bias, fear or obstacle you carry that God is calling you to transform?
2. In one sentence, what is one intention you have for changing that pattern?
3. In one sentence, what is a question your conversation partner could ask you next week to see how you're doing at your intention?

Promise of Grace

Leader: Let your heart receive this grace:
there is always another chance to lean into solidarity,
there is always another opportunity to choose compassion over comfort.

Assembly: Praise God who frees us to try again,
who persists in calling us to grow,
until we all know the joy of a flourishing life.

Passing the Peace

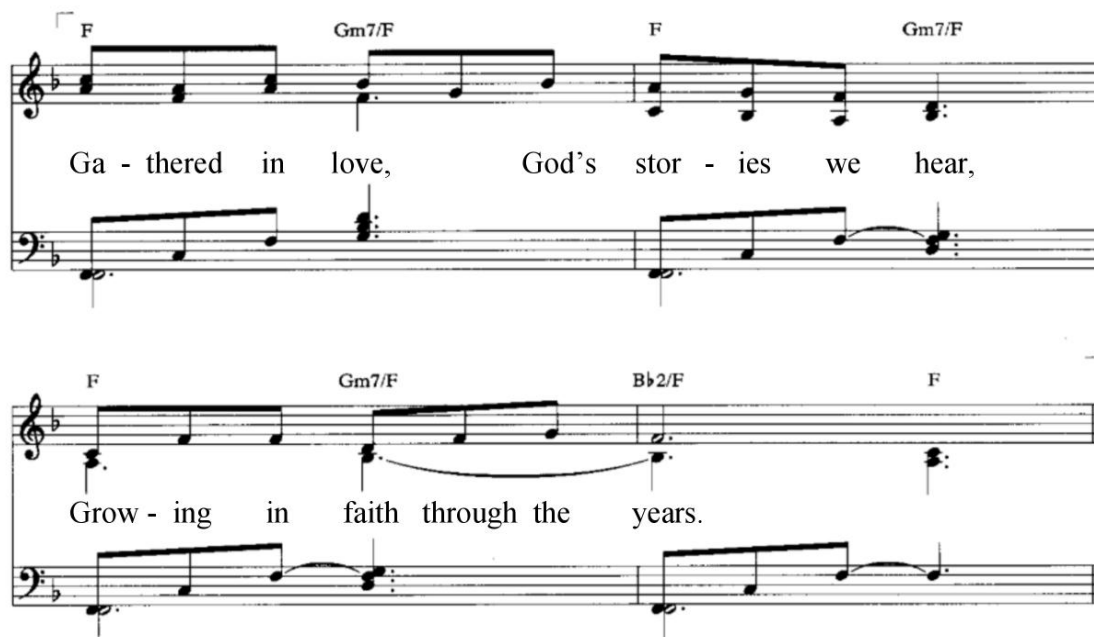
Practice 3: Embodying Attention

Gathering & Sending Music – Where Children Belong

RITCHIE

Words & Music: James Ritchie

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 8/8. The score consists of two systems, each with four measures. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes. The first system's lyrics are "This, this is where child - ren be - long," and the second system's lyrics are "Wel - comed as part of our wor - ship - ping song." Above the staff, the chords F, Gm7/F, F, and Gm7/F are indicated for each measure respectively. The melody is simple and repetitive, using eighth and quarter notes.



Message for All Ages

Rev. Katrina Forman

Scripture – Romans 12:9-18

Will Black

Music for Reflection – Ubi Caritas

Ola Gjeilo

*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
 Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
 Exsulemus, et in ipso jucundemur.
 Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
 Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.
 Amen.*

*Where charity and love are, God is there.
 The love of Christ has gathered us together.
 Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
 Let us revere and love the living God.
 And from a sincere heart let us love one
 another. Amen.*

Kristine Hart, Kimberly Martinez, Jeremy Whitener, and Bill Amory

Scripture – Luke 10:25-37

Will Black

Practice 4: Bearing Witness

Sermon: Constructivist Listening

Dr. Sharon Fennema

Practice 5: Honoring Dignity

***Hymn (insert) – Thank You Lord**

Music: African-American Traditional

1 Thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord, thank you,
 2 Been so good, been so good, been so
 3 Been my friend, been my friend, been my

Lord, good, friend, I just want to thank you, Lord.
 good, I just want to thank you, Lord.
 friend, I just want to thank you, Lord.

Prayers of the People

Rev. Katrina Forman

Joys and Concerns

Ana Patricia Martinez
 Beverly Blankenship
 Beth Turano
 Kim Crabtree

Bill Lutz
 Dori and Bob Lawson
 Alba
 Young Mo Koh

Patrice McKenzie
 Joan and Bill Icklan

Musical Call to Prayer (insert) – Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

Words & Music: Ken Medema

*Lord, listen to your children praying.
 Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
 Lord, listen to your children praying.
 Send us love, send us power, send us grace.*

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our {name for God}, 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.

Offertory and Announcements

Music for Meditation – Show Us How to Love

Words: Lindy Thompson

Sanctuary Choir

Music: Mark A. Miller

*Hearts open, minds awake.
Change us now, for heaven's sake.
Leave us not alone in hatred's wake.
Show us how to love.*

*Eyes open, souls awake.
Rules we made we now must break.*

*With our very own lives at stake,
we must learn to love.*

*Hearts open, shocked awake.
Much to learn from our mistakes.
Draw us close in our heartache.
Show us how to love.*

*Response of Thanksgiving – Doxology

Words: Thomas Ken, adapt. William B. Abernathy

GOODNESS

Music: Paul M. Vasile

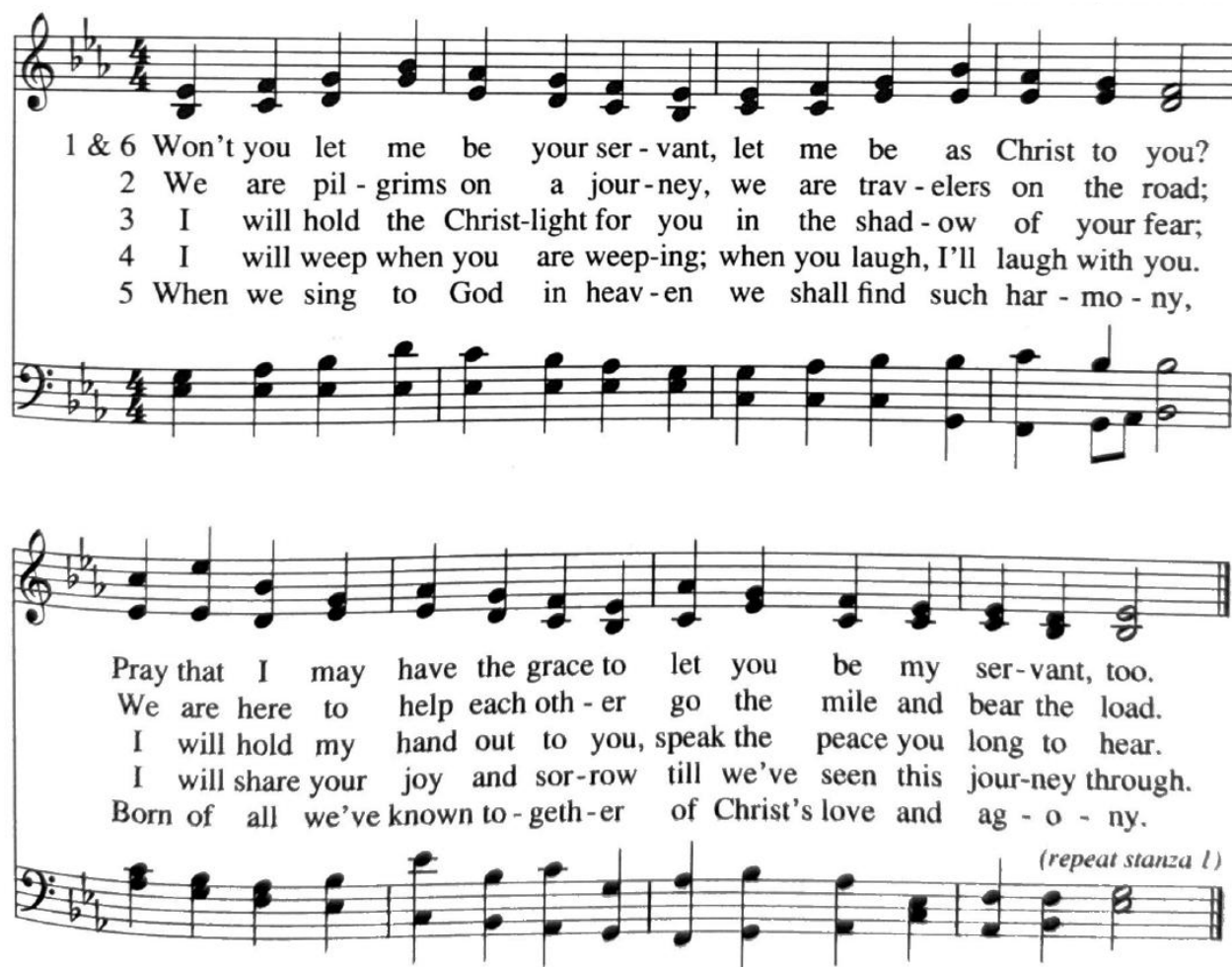
Praise to our God from whom all blessings flow; Praise to our God all creatures
4 here below; Praise to our God for all that love has done; Cre -
7 a - tor, Christ, and Spi - rit Our God the Three in One A - men.

*Prayer of Dedication (unison)

**God who draws us toward one another,
through the power of your love and the courage of our compassion,
transform these gifts into accountability and repair.
Extend these resources to reach beyond the limits of our care and concern.
Empower us to risk costly solidarity with the ignored ones, the unheard voices
calling us to love you by loving our neighbors. Amen.**

*Closing Hymn # 539 – Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant

SERVANT SONG
Words & Music: Richard Gillard



1 & 6 Won't you let me be your ser-vant, let me be as Christ to you?
 2 We are pil-grims on a jour-ney, we are trav-ellers on the road;
 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you in the shad-ow of your fear;
 4 I will weep when you are weep-ing; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
 5 When we sing to God in heav-en we shall find such har-mo-ny,
 Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my ser-vant, too.
 We are here to help each oth-er go the mile and bear the load.
 I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.
 I will share your joy and sor-row till we've seen this jour-ney through.
 Born of all we've known to-geth-er of Christ's love and ag-o-ny.
 (repeat stanza 1)

Practice 6: Deep Listening

***Benediction**

Dr. Sharon Fennema

Heart Chant by Pauline Oliveros

Bulletin Cover Art: Shaun Kennedy

Today's service was designed and written by Dr. Sharon R. Fennema. Dr. Fennema is a facilitator, ritualist, activist, teacher, and writer whose work lives at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, disability and embodied spiritual practices. She is passionate about empowering faith communities to become the justice and love we seek in the midst of the struggle for freedom. Dr. Fennema most recently served as the Curator and Storyteller for the Join the Movement toward Racial Justice initiative with the national setting of the United Church of Christ and previously was Assistant Professor of Worship and Director of Worship Life at the Pacific School of Religion.

Thank You for joining us for worship this morning. Please sign a welcome card if you are visiting and put it in the offering plate, or scan the QR code on the back of the pew to submit a welcome card electronically. Please stay for coffee hour in the Assembly Room immediately following the service.

Thank You to the Sunday Welcome Team.

Sound Operator: Joe Cristiani

Livestream Video: Nkenge Jones

Altar flowers are given to the glory of God by Blythe and Bob Chase, in celebration of our volunteers, whose humble hearts and quiet service bring Christ's love to life within our community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today After Worship

- Youth Faith Formation in the 2nd Floor Conference Room
- Inquirer's Meeting in the Guild Room
- Youth & Children's Choir in the In-Between Room
- Sanctuary Choir in the Sanctuary
- Our Faith Our Vote 2026 Postcard Deadline (See Ina Isobe for details)
- Dismantling Antisemitism: 1:00–5:00 PM at Bnai Keshet

Staff Updates

Rev. Leah will be away September 25-October 3. Please contact Rev. Katrina for pastoral care.

Next Sign-Up Fair – October 4: Congregational Care & Connection

This Week at Union

- Tuesday, September 29
 - 12:30-2:30 PM (Guild Room) - Bible Study
 - 7:00-8:30 PM (Guild Room) - *The Sum of Us* Book Discussion
 - 7:00-8:30 PM (Offsite) - Holy Hangout
- Wednesday, September 30
 - 10:30-11:30 AM (Guild Room) – Gentle Yoga
 - 7:00-8:00 PM (Sanctuary) – UCC Ringers
 - 8:00-9:30 PM (Guild Room) – “Understanding Eve” Webinar

October Worship Highlights

- October 4 – World Communion Sunday & *Drawing the Circle Wider* Part 2
 - 2nd Hour – Talk Back with Dr. Sharon Fennema
- October 11 – Blessing of the Animals (bring your pet or a photo of your pet)
 - 2nd Hour – Jade Holmgren & Roxanne Kent reflect on their trip to Tbilisi, Georgia, through the Peace Project
- October 18 – Abbreviated service followed by a congregational meeting
- October 25 – Reformation Sunday pulpit exchange featuring Rev. Jack Cuffari

2026-2027 Directory

The 2026–2027 Church Directory is complete! Members and friends should have received a digital copy by email last week. If you would like a printed copy mailed to you, please contact

the church office. If your contact information changes during the year, please let the church office know so we can keep our records up-to-date for the next directory.

AAPI New Jersey Donation Drive: September 21–30

AAPI New Jersey is collecting donations to support families impacted by ICE. Requested items include baby formula, diapers (especially size 7), personal hygiene products, wipes, cleaning supplies, toys, grocery gift cards (preferably Walmart or other major retailers), shelf-stable foods, and umbrellas. Please drop off donations on the Assembly Room porch.

Halloween Costume & Candy Drive: September 21–October 19

Help bring Halloween joy to refugee children served by Church World Service (CWS) Jersey City! We're collecting new or gently used children's and teen costumes and unopened bags of candy for CWS's annual Halloween celebration. Donation box is in the Assembly Room.

Seeds of Solidarity: Monday, September 28, 6:00–10:00 PM at The HUUB in Orange

Join Roots of Resilience for an evening of Palestinian-focused music, dance, Middle Eastern bites, vendors, raffles, and an art exhibit supporting farmers in the West Bank. Tickets are \$40 per person, with proceeds supporting Roots of Resilience initiatives benefiting West Bank farmers, including Lana Mustafa's return to her village for the olive harvest this October. Pay via Venmo to @LANA-MUSTAFA with "Seeds" in the comment.

The Sum of Us Book Discussion: Tuesday, September 29 & October 6, 7:00–8:30 PM

Join the Racial Justice Ministry Team for the first of a two-session discussion of Heather McGhee's *The Sum of Us*, in preparation for the October 13 Open Book/Open Mind program featuring McGhee in conversation with Michelle Alexander. This session will introduce the book's major themes and explore Chapter 6, which examines democracy, voting, and voter suppression. *You do not need to have read the book to participate!* Open to Middle Schoolers through adults. Scan here to RSVP so we know how much pizza to order.



Understanding Eve: Wednesday, September 30, 8:00 PM in the Guild Room

Join Gerald Walle for a viewing of the webinar *Understanding Eve: Looking at the Harm and Why It Didn't Have to Be That Way*, featuring Ciarra Jones. The presentation explores how the story of Eve has shaped the way women have been seen and understood in the Bible and how women can be understood in a different, more positive way. Contact Gerald Walle for details.

Climate Procession & Sweet Justice Ice Cream Social:

Saturday, October 3, 10:00 AM at UU Montclair

Join community members for a Climate Procession and Sweet Justice Ice Cream Social in Montclair. The morning begins at 10:00 AM at UU Montclair, followed by a one-mile procession at 10:30 AM honoring those impacted by climate disasters and celebrating climate solutions. The event concludes at 11:30 AM at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, with an ice cream social. Register here.



World Communion Sunday: Sunday, October 4

Join us for the second of our four-part series from the Racial Justice Ministry Team, exploring how we can draw the circle wider in our worship. In celebration of Communion as an act of radical unity, we invite you to bring a bread that reflects your heritage, culture, or upbringing to share during Communion. Scan here to tell us about your bread!



Fall Fun Day at Camp Johnsonburg: Sunday, October 4, 1:00-7:00 PM

Join us for a fun afternoon for all ages at Camp Johnsonburg, featuring zip-lining, boating, apple roasting, pumpkin bowling, hiking, and more, followed by a hot meal! Cost is \$15-25 per person (pay what you can); children ages 0-4 are free. We'll carpool from Union. Registration is required in two places: Camp Johnsonburg and Tithely. Scan the QR code to access both registration forms. *Sign up by Sept. 30.*



Pet Loss Support Group: Thursday, October 8, 7:00 PM in the Guild Room

The Pet Loss Support Group offers a compassionate space to share grief and find comfort with others who understand the loss of an animal companion. This new monthly group meets on the second Thursday and is facilitated by Animal Chaplain Vicki Lea Paulson. Bring a photo or memento if you wish. Please RSVP to chaplainvickilea@gmail.com or 973-619-3499.

Strangers on a Train: Friday, October 9, 7:00 PM in the Guild Room

The Union Church Film Group's next film is Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951), a classic psychological thriller based on Patricia Highsmith's novel. Join us at 6:15 PM for food and conversation before the screening. Bring your own food and beverage! The film runs 1 hour and 41 minutes and will be shown in black and white with subtitles.

Food, Faith & Fun: Saturday, October 10, 5:30-7:30 PM

Our second monthly gathering will include a shared meal, a short time of worship, and a chance to work together on the Montclair Community Time Capsule. Come enjoy good food, meaningful connection, and some fun across generations! More details to come. Scan here to RSVP.



Montclair Pride: Sunday, October 11, 12:00-4:00 PM at Lackawanna Station

Montclair Pride will take place on Sunday, October 11, in conjunction with National Coming Out Day. Union will host a vendor table from 12:00-4:00 PM, and we're looking for volunteers to help staff the table, welcome visitors, and represent Union in the community. Scan here to sign up.



CUMAC Service Project (High School Only)

Monday, October 12, 10:30 AM-1:30 PM

CUMAC is "Feeding people. Changing lives." Join us in helping them fulfill their mission by providing groceries to families in need. We'll gather at the church. Scan here to sign up by Sunday, Oct. 4. When you register, Leah will



send you a link to register directly with CUMAC.

Youth Group Lock-in: Friday, October 16, 6:00 PM – Saturday, Oct. 17, at 8:00 AM

Come join us for all night fun. We'll begin with dinner on Friday and end with breakfast on Saturday morning. The night will be filled with food, a service project, games, worship, music, movies, plenty of fun and a little bit of sleep. Cost \$25. Bring your sleeping bag and pillow. Scan here to RSVP!



Women's Breakfast: Saturday, October 17, 9:00 AM

The October Women's Breakfast will feature Vicki Lea Paulson, a lifelong animal lover who began her journey to animal chaplaincy as a teenager, working in her father's veterinary practice. Vicki will share the story of her journey as an ordained Animal Chaplain. Breakfast with gluten-free options will be served for \$7. Guests are welcome! Please RSVP to Karen Ermler at karen.ermler@gmail.com.

Men's Retreat: Friday, October 23–Sunday, October 25, at Crossroads Camp

Join the men of Union for our annual retreat, "Wrestling with God: Faith, Struggle, and the Blessing We Don't Expect," led by Rev. Jeff Mansfield. Scholarships are available - please contact Mike Spinella or Jon Thomsen. Scan the QR code to register!



Youth Outing - Gotham FC vs Utah Women's Soccer Game: Sunday, November 1, at 5:00 PM

Come cheer for the home team with us! Cost \$30. We'll depart at 3:45 PM and return around 8:00 PM. Scan here to sign up by Oct. 9 so we can purchase tickets.



For more information about upcoming events at Union, please [visit our website](#) by scanning the QR code here.

Thank you for your support of Union Cong Church. [To donate online](#), simply scan the QR code here.

