



Welcome

ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR

Sunday,

July 30, 2023

10:00 AM

Ninth Sunday

After Pentecost



AN OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION IN SKOKIE, IL



Welcome to Worship!

SUNDAYS @ 10:00AM

In-person Worship. Masks and distance recommended, not required

Livestream on YouTube. Live at 10am then available on our channel

"The Redheaded Preacher" Podcast. Available wherever you get your podcasts, includes sermon and scriptures only, posted weekly by Tuesday



Ways to Give

Text Your Gift. Text your gift to [844-977-2346](tel:844-977-2346)

After a short set-up the first time, simply text your gift amount

Use PayPal. [PayPal.me/stpeteruccskokie](https://www.paypal.com/merchot/x-cmd=showitem&item=STPETERUCCSKOKIE)

Send a Check. Mail to the address below ... this way still works fine

Set up Vanco. Contact the church office to enroll in regular giving



Open Communion

All Christians and seekers after God are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper with us the **first Sunday of every month** and special Holy Days (Christmas, Maundy Thursday, and Easter). **At-home Communion** participants are invited to provide their own elements and join when Pastor bids you, "take, eat, and drink."



About St. Peter's UCC

We've been in the heart of downtown Skokie since 1867. We are a part of the United Church of Christ, which means we are passionate about our faith and open in our thinking. We believe in a Triune God who **loves everyone**, regardless of gender identity, orientation, race, status, or physical or mental ability, and we **joyously welcome all people** to share worship, membership, marriage, baptism, funeral, and fellowship with us.



Contact, Follow, or Talk to Us

Rev. Richard Lanford (Pastor): revlanford@gmail.com

In the office Wed-Sat (times vary) and Sundays

Laura Olson (Office Manager): office@stpeteruccskokie.org

Office hours Mon-Fri 9am to 2pm

Ben Westphal (Music Director): bcwestphal@gmail.com

Facebook/Instagram/YouTube: [stpeteruccskokie](https://www.facebook.com/stpeteruccskokie)

Website: www.stpeteruccskokie.org

Like, follow, or join our email list for up-to-date info about events and activities!



8013 Laramie Avenue, Skokie, IL 60077 | 847-673-8166

St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Skokie
Order of Worship for
Sunday, July 30, 2023 at 10:00am
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Welcome to worship. The music before the service is intended as a time of silent prayer and preparation.

PRELUDE Selected

THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peggy Reins

Will those who are able please stand up

CALL TO WORSHIP

Carolyn Van Til

L: Like a whisper that lures us to safety,

C: Strong as a shout that bids us to come,

L: Gentle as a prayer that eases our worry,

C: Like a clear bell that rings out our name,

L: Your Word comes to us, Loving God.

C: It calls us, comforts us and urges us to depart from evil and do good, to seek peace and pursue it.

L: Talking God, open our hearts to hear you

C: And free our voices to praise you. Let us worship our Triune God!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *in unison after silently reading it*
Creating God, in love You moved over the waters of chaos and separated sea from dry land. And yet, we cling tightly to rigid boundaries of our own making. You claim us in the waters of baptism and declare us dead to sin and alive in Christ. But too often we deny that call, conforming ourselves to the whims of culture. At Pentecost, You released Your wild and transforming spirit to flow through church and world. But we want to tame that wildness, channeling Your Spirit through banks of ordered safety. Transform us, we pray. Soften the unyielding edges of our hearts. Loosen our grip on “the way it’s always been” and prepare us for the joy of “the way it still can be,” through Jesus Christ. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

L: An epistle lesson we heard last Sunday tells us, “The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.” Our God is a patient and merciful God, ready to embrace us as we realize the errors of our misdirection and come back to where we are meant to be, with Jesus Christ. By what Christ has done for us in the ultimate expression of God’s grace, forgiving us and offering us new, resurrection life, I ask the church to join me in acclamation with the words . . .

A: Alleluia! Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN “Heaven and Earth and Sea and Air” #45

1. Heaven and earth, and sea and air, All their Mak - er's praise de - clare;
 2. See the glo - rious orb of day Break - ing through the clouds his way;
 3. See how He hath ev - ery - where Made this earth so rich and fair;
 4. Lord, great won - ders work - est Thou! To Thy sway all crea - tures bow;

Wake, my soul, a - wake and sing: Now thy grate - ful prais - es bring.
 Moon and stars with sil - very light Praise Him through the si - lent night.
 Hill and vale and fruit - ful land, All things liv - ing, show His hand.
 Write Thou deep - ly in my heart What I am, and what Thou art. A - MEN.

The congregation may be seated

WORDS ABOUT OFFERINGS**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Gospel

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

MUSICAL MEDITATION Selected

The congregation may be seated

PASTORAL AND SILENT PRAYERS

Rev. Blair Ann Hull

THE LORD'S PRAYER

A: 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**

SERMON

“Weaving the Future”

Will those who are able please rise to sing

HYMN

“To What Can the Kingdom of God Be Compared”

Sing to the tune “TO GOD BE THE GLORY” with Refrain

To what can the kingdom of God be compared?

A mustard seed falls where a field's been prepared,

And there, where predictable plantings should be,

There grows up a wild bush — as big as a tree!

God of love, here on earth, hidden things still surprise:

**Loving deeds ... signs of birth ... faithful, Spirit-filled
lives.**

Your reign is amazing, your ways still astound,

Just like that new life springing forth from the ground.

A small bit of leaven will change the whole bread:

A poor woman sees that her neighbors are fed,

A church reaches out to the youth in the town,

A man shares his faith and God's blessings abound.

God of love, here on earth, hidden things still surprise:

**Loving deeds ... signs of birth ... faithful, Spirit-filled
lives.**

Your reign is among us, creation is blessed,

When even a few faithful lives change the rest.

**While some look for treasure or one priceless pearl,
God's reign is the gift wise ones seek in this world.**

A girl sells possessions to help those in need;

A boy chooses faithfulness rather than greed.

God of love, here on earth, hidden things still surprise:

Loving deeds ... signs of birth ... faithful, Spirit-filled

lives.

Your reign is a treasure that wise ones pursue;

May we seek your kingdom in all that we do.

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CHARGE and BENEDICTION

L: Engage your world as brothers and sisters of Jesus.
Treat all God's children as next-of-kin.

**C: God has called us into community.
Jesus leads us into a life of service.**

L: Praise God for all creation, including yourself.
Praise God for the variety of people who surround us.

**C: We share one flesh and blood with all humanity.
We share one flesh and blood with Jesus Christ.**

L: Surely we are loved, welcomed, and blessed.
God's presence goes with us in all we do.

**C: Wherever we go, we can count on God's care.
Whatever we face, Christ will meet us there.**

L: Amen.

C: Amen.

POSTLUDE

Selected

The music after the service is intended as a time of reflection. Pastor will be pleased to greet you at the Sanctuary doors as soon as the postlude has concluded, and our livestream has stopped.

FOR WORSHIP TODAY

MINISTER	Rev. Richard Lanford
MUSIC DIRECTOR	Ben Westphal
DEACON	Jenn Schneider
LIVESTREAM RECORDING	Beth Sterba
NURSERY ATTENDANT	Annie Noorts

News in the Pews

“[Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39, NIV). What better reason to worship together! Welcome.

We welcome back this morning the Rev. Blair Ann Hull! A minister in the United Church of Christ, she has pastored congregations in Deerfield, IL; Campbell, CA; and Whitewater, WI among others. She and Pastor Richard have known each other as colleagues in CMA Cluster 1 for many years. She will return next Sunday to pray, preach, and celebrate Holy Communion with us.

Thank you to everyone who donated to, shopped for groceries for, and helped to serve lunch yesterday at the Community Kitchen of A Just Harvest! We could not be a partner in mission with them without you! Our next 5th Saturday is September 30th!

Thanks to everyone who served in the various ministries of the church this morning -- ministries of hospitality, administration and worship!

RUMMAGE SORTING SCHEDULE: Openers and sorting times this week are Annie/Ginger Tuesday from 10 AM to noon, Heidi/Carolyn Wednesday from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM and Beth Bailey Friday from 10 AM to noon. You are

welcome to come anytime within those hours and stay as long as you are able.

Pastor Richard's vacation continues through next Sunday; after Monday and Tuesday as days off, he's back in the study on Wednesday, August 9th.

At its meeting yesterday, your Church Council voted to form a Strategic Planning Committee to help guide the congregation in its decision making. This Committee will use the UCC Local Church Profile to structure its work. The new Local Church Profile is designed to be a Discovery Document for congregations, leading them through these questions: Who are we now? Who is our neighbor? Who is God calling us to become? The Committee will review the Local Church Profile form, identify questions of strategic importance within it, and engage with resources that will help the congregation answer those questions. If you are interested in learning more and possibly serving on the Committee, please contact Pastor or Church President Peggy Reins.

In two weeks, after worship which will incorporate the Service of Healing out of our United Church of Christ Book of Worship, your ad hoc ONA Support Committee is sponsoring a coffee hour and a screening of the documentary "Learn with Love," created by the Trevor Project. The August Announcer will have complete details. Please plan to stay!

Our People

Happy Birthday this week to Linda Haig, Sharon Johnson and Richard Hook, who turns 85 next Sunday! Happy Anniversary to Gail & Jack Hollerich.

According to the schedule, barring any switches next Sunday's Lay Liturgist / Lector will be Rich Schneider; the Nursery Attendant is to be Carolyn Van Til.

One way to boost our church's profile on Facebook is by liking or loving our church's posts when you see them on your feed. The more 'hits' we get the more people will get the messages! Also visit our YouTube page and hit the thumbs-up on a service of ours. If you listen to the RedHeaded Preacher podcast, giving a good rating helps too! These things elevate our likelihood of being noticed by others online.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

PRESIDENT	Peggy Reins
VICE-PRESIDENT	Beth Lanford
TREASURER	Chad McCoy
SECRETARY	Annie Noorts
FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Maria Altmayer

Regular Reminders!

We are always grateful for any and all offerings to the church. No amount is too small! So many thanks to everyone who's been keeping us going with your donations! See inside the bulletin's front cover for details on how to donate.

Let us know you were here! Please fill out the black pew pads when you arrive and pass them to the center aisle during the service. Thank you!

Please remember that we can always use food contributions for the Mini-Pantry!

Pastor's podcast is available wherever you listen to podcasts! Just type in "The Redheaded Preacher" and you'll find us! Pastor's weekly podcasts include the prior Sunday's scriptures and sermon, and some words and prayer from Pastor just for the listeners of the podcast!



MISSION MOMENTS

July 30, 2023

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Weaving the Future

Today's reading contains many mini-parables, a couple sentences each. Parables, short and seemingly simple stories meant to instruct and guide, are used often by Jesus as a means of teaching. Although they are simple, the parables sometimes leave the listener scratching their head and asking, "what did that mean?" It's a paradox of our faith, that it is the very mysteriousness of the parables which reveals so much. Because there are nearly infinite meanings to each one, parables are one of the strongest examples that, as we say in the United Church of Christ, "God is still speaking."

Your reaction to the parable reveals a God who continually invites us into the surprise of an ongoing conversation, one in which the partners know and love one another but still can't guess what the other is going to say next. As you dive into the mystery of the parable you are invited to get curious, ask questions, and express wonder, ultimately growing in your understanding of God's work in your life, and your own faith journey.

But your reaction to the parables is not the only measure of your ability to ask questions as you grow in your faith. Take a look at the order of service (also called the liturgy) for your worship service today. Does it contain a prayer of confession? The prayer of confession works like a parable - it invites you into conversation with God and with yourself. As you say the words of the prayer of confession, you are invited to get curious, ask questions and express wonder about God's work in your own life and the life of your faith community.

One of the parables today says that the kingdom of heaven is the net that is thrown into the sea, catching fish "of every kind." One of the many ways of thinking of this parable is that in the Reign of God, all are drawn into, and pulled together into the divine. But then some fish are kept, and some are not. Perhaps we include the prayer of confession as a small parable in our worship services because we do not believe that fish are born worthy or unworthy. Instead, we believe that within each person is the power to grow, change and be transformed.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.

So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."