

Epler's Church, United Church of Christ
Rev. Gary Rarick
Mr. Brian Gibson – Director of Music
Ministers – ALL THE MEMBERS EVERYDAY

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Blessing of the Backpacks and Teachers
August 23, 2026 — 9:30 a.m.

*We extend a warm welcome to our guests and visitors.
No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here. In order for us to have a record
of your visit, kindly fill out a visitor's card.
We hope you will worship with us again soon.*

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION:

Church Office: Phone: 610-926-1006

Email: eplerschurch@gmail.com

Pastor: Rev. Gary Rarick

Phone: 610-401-1545 (cell)

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Online: www.eplerschurch.org

www.facebook.com/eplers

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Epler's Church, The United Church of Christ, is a commitment to worship, praise, and honor God as caring and inclusive Christians who seek to learn and grow while continuing Christ's ministry of love, mission, and service in our congregation, community, and the world.

NCH = New Century (black) Hymnal; **GH** = Green Hymnal

(*) Indicates please stand if you are able.

Welcome and Greeting

Prelude

Call to Worship

Leader: Summer is ending. The mornings are about to get earlier.

All: God is with us.

Leader: New rooms, new names to learn, new questions we don't know how to ask yet.

All: God is with us.

Leader: Some of us cannot wait. Some of us are dreading it. Most of us are both.

All: God is with us.

Leader: Come, let us worship the Holy One who goes with us—into every classroom, every hallway, every bus ride, every first day.

All: God is with us. Amen.

Invocation

***Opening Hymn**

CH #193

“God Is So Good”
(please see insert)

***Prayer of Confession**

Leader: Let us pray together. When we act in ways that are unloving. O God...

All: Please forgive us.

Leader: When we mistreat others that are different than us. O God...

All: Please forgive us.

Leader: When we feel that we are better than others because we did better on a test or have more friends. O God...

All: Please forgive us.

Leader: When we as adults and children do not act as we should. O God...

All: Please forgive us. Amen.

(Time of silent prayer.)

***Kyrie**

NCH #750

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.

All: Lord, have mercy upon us.

Pastor: Christ, have mercy upon us.

All: Christ, have mercy upon us.

Pastor: Lord, have mercy upon us.

All: Lord, have mercy upon us.

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

***Response**

NCH #765

Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia,
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia.

Choir Anthem “River in Judea” -Jack Feldman

Organ Voluntary

Passing of the Peace

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

As you share the peace with one another, please be respectful of any individuals that may be uncomfortable with physical contact.

Children's Message

(please bring your backpacks to the front with you.)

Blessing of the Backpacks

A Litany for the Ones Who Are Not Excited

Leader: To the one who is dreading Monday:

All: You are not being dramatic. We believe you.

Leader: To the one who does not know where to sit at lunch:

All: There is a table for you here. There will be one there.

Leader: To the one who has to decide, again, how much of yourself is safe to bring to school:

All: All of you is welcome here. All of you is holy.

Leader: To the one whose name gets said wrong—or whose name gets used as a weapon:

All: God calls you by your name. The true one.

Leader: To the one going back into a building where you have been hurt:

All: We will not tell you to be fine. We will go with you.

Leader: To the one who is genuinely, uncomplicatedly excited:

All: Your joy is holy too. Take it with you.

Leader: To all of us, whatever we are carrying:

All: God is already there. We are right behind you.

Blessing for teachers, staff, and everyone who works in the schools

Scripture Reader

-George Arnold

Scripture Lesson:

Psalms 121:1-2

Page 682

Scripture Lesson:

John 15:12-17

Page 147

Message

“You are chosen”

-Rev. Gary Rarick

Hymn

CH #184

“Thy Word”

(please see insert)

Apostles’ Creed

**I believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth:**

**And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead and buried;
he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand
of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge
the quick and the dead.**

I believe in the Holy Ghost;

**the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the Church

The 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 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.

Prayer Response

NCH #769

“Hear Our Prayer”

Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God;
incline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.

Offering Invitation

***Offertory Response**

NCH #780

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Offering Blessing**

Benediction

Three-Fold Amen

***Hymn**

NCH #82

“Go, My Children, with My Blessing”

Go, my children, with my blessing, never alone;
Waking, sleeping, I am with you, you are my own;
In my love's baptismal river
I have made you mine forever,
Go, my children, with my blessing, you are my own.

Go, my children, fed and nourished, closer to me;
Grow in love and love by serving, joyful and free.
Here my Spirit's power filled you,
here with tender comfort stilled you;
Go, my children, fed and nourished, joyful and free.

In this union I have joined you husband and wife,
Now, my children, live together as heirs of life:
Each the other's gladness sharing,
each the other's burdens bearing,
Now, my children, live together as heirs of life.

Postlude



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Worship Assistants and Sponsors:

The memorial bowl flower is presented by Linda Bachman in memory of John Bachman.

The altar flowers are presented by Linda Bachman for all August birthdays.

Consistory Caretaker for this month is Jo-Ann Ketterer.

Acolyte for this Sunday is Kinley Maulick.

Greeter for this Sunday is Robin Ganster.

People in need of our prayers: Scott Wails, Lori Haupt, JoKay Gassert, Lydia Grube, Sandy Weller, Nancy Colver, Amy Keller, Georgia Wails, Denise Jeffries, Lesle Rotter, Mike Kemery, Barry Spatz, Kathy, Judy Kline, Barbara Bond, and family of Richard Bond

Homebound Members in need of our prayers: Betty Roth, George Sakacs, Jo-Ann Carter, Phyllis Miller, Alex Cameron, Doris Moyer, Linda King, and Phil Whitmoyer

Military Deployment: Captain David R. Brickey, USAF

Announcements & Upcoming Worship and Activities:

Nursery School: There is no nursery care today. Please allow your little ones to remain with you; enjoy the music and service; and don't worry if they 'make a little bit of noise'. We are blessed to have children of God of all ages worship in their own ways.

New Custodian Needed: The church leadership has accepted the resignation of our custodian effective at the end of August. We are now looking for a new custodian.

If you or someone that you know is interested, please see the information about the job below:

Epler's Church, UCC is hiring for a part-time custodian to clean the church weekly. The hours are flexible, but the church must be cleaned by each Sunday morning for worship. The hourly rate is \$15.00 with an estimated 3-5 hours per week. Interested candidates should send their resume to Pastor Gary at pastorrarick@gmail.com.

Reading-Berks CROP Hunger Walk and the Kick-off Event at Isaac's: Please mark your calendar to dine in or take out food from Isaac's in Wyomissing on **Thursday, August 27 from 11:00 AM - 7:30 PM** for the fundraiser to support the Reading-Berks Crop Hunger Walk. Isaac's will donate 15% of all food sales on August 27 to help the hungry people in our community. Thank you in advance for supporting this annual cause. If you have any questions, please ask Heather Ninfo in church or contact her by cell phone at 610/334-9136.

If you want to walk in the Crop Walk with people from our church, please see me on the last Sunday of this month after I have the donation envelopes. The walk is on Sunday, October 11, at 1:00 PM at Gring's Mill.

- Heather Ninfo, Missions

Fishbowl for August: We will be collecting for Trinity United Church of Christ, Indiana Township, in western Pennsylvania after a massive fire destroyed their 150-year-old church building in May.

Last Sunday's Attendance: 62

Worship Time Change: Our worship time will change back to **10:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 13th**. Please note: This is the correct date as to what was printed in the August newsletter.

Sunday School Begins on **September 13th**, at **9:15 a.m.**

Fall Book Group: Our Book Group will be meeting on **Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. beginning on September 14th**. We will be discussing the book *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* by Marcus Borg. We will meet for 11 weeks. Please email Pastor Gary if you would like a book ordered for you.

A bit about the book: Borg wants to show us, as today's thinking Christians, how to discover a life of faith by reconceptualizing familiar beliefs. Being born again, for example, has nothing to do with fundamentalism, but is a call to radical personal transformation. Talking about the kingdom of God does not mean that you are fighting against secularism, but that you have committed your life to the divine values of justice and love. And living the true Christian way is essentially about opening one's heart—to God, and to others.

September Sign-up Sheets: We are in need of Memorial Bowl sponsors for September 6 and 13; Altar Flower sponsors for September 6 and 27; a Reader for September 20; and a Greeter for September 27.

Help is Needed: We are looking for a few more Sunday school teachers for the nursery and youth classes. If you can give one week per month or every two months (or more), we will accept your assistance. The

curriculum is on a rotating basis with different ways to teach the Bible stories. These ways include: Bible stories and games, Cooking, Science, Craft, etc. Please prayerfully consider assisting with this meaningful ministry. If you have any questions or are feeling the Spirit encouraging you to help out, please speak with Pastor Gary or Robin Ganster.

Leesport Community Days: On September 11th from 5-10 p.m. and September 12th from 4-9 p.m. we will have a stand at the Leesport Community Days. We are in need of help to be at the stand as well as people to make baked goods (hand-held items in individual bags) for a fundraiser. Please sign up for both things in the Sunday School hallway.

At the stand we will have a FREE mini-golf game for the kids; the bake sale where everything will be pre-packaged in individual bags; and a “tell us your favorite movie” sign to encourage people to come and have conversations about who we are as individuals and as a congregation. If you have any questions, speak with Pastor Gary or Stephanie Brickey.

Sunday Nursery Care Volunteers Needed: We are asking for volunteers so that we can provide nursery care during every worship service following the Children’s Sermon for children in Kindergarten and younger.

Sign-up sheets for August are available in the nursery school hallway for those who have completed their clearances and would like to volunteer. If you do not yet have your clearances, please contact the church office for information on how to obtain them.

SV Food Pantry Summer Snack Donations: The

Schuylkill Valley Food Pantry has asked that our congregation please donate additional snacks during the summer months to help families with children who will not be in school those months.

A few suggestions for nutritious food donations are:

- ✓ fruit cups and dried fruits
- ✓ snack packs of pudding and gelatins
- ✓ granola bars
- ✓ snack size items such as cereals and crackers
- ✓ individual servings of macaroni & cheese and soups

Thank you in advance for being so extremely generous as you have in past years! – Heather Ninfo, Missions

Schedule for this week *August 23, 2026:*

Sunday: **9:30 a.m.** - Worship
 -Blessing of the Backpacks and Teachers
 1:00-4:00 p.m. - HORC
Tuesday: 7:00-9:00 p.m. - HORC
Wednesday: 6:00 p.m. - LLNS Meet the Teacher Night
 7:00 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal
Thursday: 7:00 p.m. - Budget Committee Meeting
 7:00-9:00 p.m. - HORC

Schedule for next week *August 30, 2026:*

Sunday: **9:30 a.m.** - Worship
 -Healing Service
 1:00-4:00 p.m. - HORC
Monday: First Day of LLNS
Tuesday: 7:00-9:00 p.m. - HORC
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m. - Choir Rehearsal
Thursday: 7:00-9:00 p.m. - HORC

Friday: 6:00 p.m. - Food and Faith Fellowship Meal
 7:00 p.m. - Food and Faith Worship Service

* HORC – House of Restoration Congregation. A separate congregation that worship in our space.



ISAAC'S FUNDRAISER\$

Support Our Fundraiser

Our organization earns 15% of all Dine-In, Take-Out, and Catering.

Thursday, August 27, 2026

To Benefit

Reading-Berks CROP Hunger Walk

At Isaac's

Spring Ridge

94 Commerce Dr. Wyomissing

ONLINE ORDERS - Enter "Fundraiser" in the box on the payment page.

TAKEOUT ORDERS - Let Isaac's team member know you are part of our fundraiser when placing your order.

**Sorry, we cannot accept coupons, discounts or Loyalty perks on Fundraising orders.*