

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Organist: Karen Cain
November 15, 2020

Pastor: Rev. Dana Schindler
Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

“Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Welcome to Immanuel United Church of Christ. We are glad that you have chosen to worship with us today. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here. Our church building is closed due to the pandemic, but our church people are still being the church together. Please leave a comment to let us know you are here. Make note of any prayer concerns and joys you may have—first names only please.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Worship is a gift to God that transforms our spirits. In that spirit of transformation, we are called to bring God gifts of our time, talent, and treasure. Offerings may be mailed to Immanuel UCC at 5838 Staunton Road, Edwardsville, IL. 62025. Please help us to continue to meet our financial responsibilities and continue our ministries.

Music used is covered under our CCLI livestreaming license # 4012842. Today for our service, you will need your worship guide.

THE BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY in Hamel is open on Mondays from 9:00am till 10:30am. All who need assistance are welcome.

FOOD DRIVE NOVEMBER 21st has been cancelled due to increasing COVID-19 infection rates. If you have food to donate, it can be delivered to the parsonage.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Canned Fruits	Coffee	Pancake mix
Syrup	Mustard	Sugar
Flour	Cooking Oil	Hamburger helper
BBQ Sauce	Salad Dressing	Ketchup
Tuna	Also need empty egg cartons	

CONFIRMATION will meet on Zoom today (Sunday) at 10:30 am. We will discuss chapters 22 and 23 in our book. Today’s class is for confirmands only.

Poinsettia Orders We are now taking orders for poinsettias. Cost is \$9.00 each. Please email Barb at Down2laps@aol.com if you would like to order. Please list # of poinsettias and in memory of. Checks can be made payable to the church and either mailed or dropped in the offering plate. Deadline is November 25th.

Connection Point Ornaments for Kindercottage Each year Connection Point adopts kids from Kindercottage for Christmas. We need your help to continue this project. Connection Point has made ornaments again this year. For a donation of \$10 we will send you a wooden ornament shown above. Contact Barb if you would like to donate. Thank you in advance.

CONNECTION POINT THANKSGIVING SCAVENGER HUNT

November 15th at 1 pm! We have at least 12 stops in the area that have hidden canned goods that we must find. The canned goods will be donated to the Scouts food drive. Along the way there may be roadblocks to complete in order to get your next clue!

> This event involves driving so a parent is needed to participate. This can be an entire family activity. If your child has their driver's license they may participate without a parent as long as they have your consent.

> Prizes will be awarded for the first across the finish line, last across the finish line, and most creative decorating of car. Additional prizes might be found along the way!

> Social distancing will be practiced and no direct contact with the other teams will be observed. Face masks required.

> Please RSVP by November 8th

COMMUNICATION AND DIGITAL OUTREACH We now have a texting system we can use to quickly communicate with the congregation event reminders, cancellations, and other matters. It can also be used in conjunction with our Facebook page and our website. Please sign up by texting "Connect" (without the quotation marks" to 618-268-1394. You will receive a reply and a link to a form to complete. Please add this number to your contact list as the church so you will know who is texting you. Thanks to Dave Schindler for setting this up for us.

VOLUNTEERS FOR AV SYSTEM will be contacted to begin training once the installation of computer equipment is completed. Thanks to all who have volunteered.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

to learn how to do Facebook livestreaming—see Dave Schindler
 to be part of the Vision Team—see Joyce or Lynn
 to help with youth activities—see Barb
 to administer the website—see Ruth

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Ruth: officeiucc@gomadison.com
 Pastor Dana: pastoriucc@gomadison.com

JOYS

Mary Ann is home following her procedure with a good outcome reported.

Our church council was able to work together to make a difficult decision no one wanted to make.

In a time when so much must change, God's love remains unchanged.

CONCERNS

Maria S.	Harry S	Lillie H
Tony M.	Deb M.	Kathie R
Hope S.	Carole G.	Tomiko J.
Wayne S.	Dave K.	Rose O.
Roxanne	Kathleen L.	Michelle L.
Emily F.	T.J.	Kristy K.
Dorothy D.	Jane B.	Lisa S.
Marion R.	Mary Ann C.	Our Veterans

Students/School Personnel
 Those affected by natural disasters
 Our country as we deal with pandemic and social unrest
 Pastor Dana, as she leads

POINT TO PONDER

"You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore." *William Faulkner, 20th century*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come let us worship God who has entrusted us with amazing gifts. Let us use those gifts to glorify God's holy kingdom of love!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Gracious God, we give thanks for the amazing gifts you have given to each

of us: gifts of teaching, healing, inspiring, challenging and creating and so many more. Guide us to use these gifts as we reach out to our community and nation, so that we may bear witness to your love and mercy. In Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.

HYMN

“I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” #2153 TFWS

I’m gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna live so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna work so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna work so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna pray so God can use me,
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna pray so God can use me,
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna sing so God can use me,
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I’m gonna sing so God can use me,
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Generous God, you have entrusted us with a multitude of gifts and talents. We know you expect us to use them well, blessing us as we do so. But far too often, we fail. We fear the failure and make excuses because our fear and inability to trust your guidance. Lord, forgive us when we are afraid, stubborn, apathetic, and indifferent to the needs that surround us. Help us to trust your gifts and talents and use them boldly. Open our hearts to serving you and our community. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

We have been called, trusted, and gifted for service. Rejoice, and know that we are forgiven. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC*Karen Cain***HOLY SCRIPTURE****Matthew 25:14-30**

[Jesus said:] "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

"Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Good Morning! I hope each of you had a good week last week and that this week will be even better!

Today I want to talk about what we are good at. Each of us has something special that we do well.

I know that Alaina is a fantastic reader. That is awesome! People who read well usually read a lot. The more we read, the more things we learn and understand. Readers are often people of great ideas too.

Lydia has a great sense of humor. The world can be a sad place and humor can help people let go of their sadness and connect with each other in good ways. That is a terrific talent to have.

Ben plays the violin and piano. Melanie plays piano and sings. Maddie also sings. Musical talent is a wonderful talent to have. Throughout history, people have used music to let others know their feelings. Music has a great power to reach people in ways that talking just can't. Music is one of the most beautiful ways we can express ourselves.

Nate is good at martial arts. I never really understood martial arts until our son took karate. Martial arts are a great way to learn self-discipline. As someone improves their skills, they learn that the point is not to fight others, it is to be used for self-defense. If they must fight, they learn to control their actions to use the least force possible. Students of martial arts are taught to look after those who are weaker. In a world where issues sometimes need a physical response, these are great skills to have.

Ally, Max, and Haley are all good at sports. That means that they are strong and have good self-discipline. That will help them to do physical tasks, but it also teaches them to work together with others to achieve a goal. Those are also great skills to have.

We each have been given at least one special gift or talent. And we are expected to use whatever it is. When we do, we make the world a better place. So, use your talents whenever you can. It might lead you to your life's work or it might just make you and those you know happy, but whatever happens, God will be pleased.

PRAYER

God of gifts, thank you for each of our gifts. Help us to use them to help ourselves and everyone we meet. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SERMON**“Risky Business”***Rev. Dana Schindler*

When I think of talents people have, I am reminded of the teenaged boy who claimed his greatest talent was his ability to belch the alphabet. I never considered it a talent until I learned about communication problems of those who have their larynx removed due to injury or cancer. The best way for them to learn how to talk is to modify belches to speak. I still haven't learned how to do it, but it would be a good talent to have.

Traditionally when we talk about this scripture, we think of it in terms of skills and approach it as a “use it or lose it” message. But that isn't really the message that was intended.

A talent in biblical times, was a measure of money. In fact, one talent was about 14 years' worth of salary. So, the servant who received 5 talents received about 70 years of salary. The master was indeed a wealthy man.

The first two servants received their money and invested it enough to double it in a relatively short time. If you have a 401K or invest in the stock market, you know that this would involve taking a lot of risk. They could have easily lost it all. But they took the risk.

The third servant played it safe. He could have taken the money and left town. That's a lot of money. He could have put it in the bank. That wasn't as much risk as the others took, but in that time, it was a risk. He took absolutely NO risk. He returned every bit of the money to his master.

And the master was angry. Really angry.

Why?

The story isn't about the “good servants” who doubled their money. They are actually bit players. The story isn't about the money either. The master would likely have been just as fine if they HAD lost the money.

The story is about the relationship of the master and the servants. The master trusted the “good servants”—he trusted them with more. When they risked everything for the master, they were rewarded by being invited to a closer relationship.

The third servant believed his master to be harsh, expecting what he could not deliver, so he acted in fear. His fear of his master kept him from taking a risk and it also kept him from developing a closer relationship.

All three servants were expected to take a risk.

Perhaps the real question we are asked to consider today is what risk does God expect us to take?

Listen again: what risk does God expect us to take?

We are living in a fear-filled time. These fears may be rational—fear of contracting COVID-19 is a legitimate fear, especially for those of us who are senior citizens or have certain pre-existing conditions or live with those at higher risk. I appreciate that our families with school-aged children understand the possibility of transmitting the virus to us and chose to worship online when they could have come to in person worship services. I understand all of those who are in a high-risk group who stay at home and worship online or by using our worship guide. When the church council decided to begin in person worship, the risk was actually quite low, but now that it has increased so much, we realize that it is the most loving thing for us to follow state and conference recommendations, so that we may all be safe.

Other fears are not so rational. People are often so afraid of doing something new, that they simply won't, even if it would be in their best interest, even if it would help them survive. When faced with the choice of doing what has always been done or taking a risk and doing a new thing, many people will choose the thing that has always been done.

Even if it isn't working.

What risk does God expect us to take?

I have heard the fear that our church will die from many of our people. In this time of pandemic many churches have died and many more will die. Ours does not have to be part of that number, but if we are not willing to take a risk to do something new or to do an old thing in a new way, it could be. When we can't do what we've always done, our only choices are to do nothing or to do something new.

It is hard to consider starting something new when we are still grieving what we can't do, but sometimes the best way to deal with grief is to take a first

step, to choose a path and make a plan. And yes, it will be uncomfortable.

We will have to choose a vision of what we want to happen and start working toward making it happen. Helen Keller said “alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

And friends, we have everything we need to do just that. We have people who are great at coming up with ideas. Many of them are on the Vision Team. If you are a person with ideas, you should join them. We have people who know this community and its people. If you are one of them, you should share that knowledge with the rest of us. We have people with a wide variety of gifts and talents, just like our gifted and talented young people. We need to use them as best we can. We have many hard workers. And we have a church family who loves God and each other.

God is calling us to be the light in this time of darkness, but we will have to do something new. We will have to take a risk. Christ took the greatest risk ever for each of us. What risk are we willing to take, what new thing can we do in this difficult time to honor the church that bears his name? Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

God of wisdom and patience, we know what is expected of us, but we hesitate. We doubt. Despite our many gifts and talents, we just don't believe that we can do the hard work of building your church in our community and world, sometimes we don't even manage to build the kingdom in our own hearts. We often adopt an attitude of “we can't” when we should be saying “let's do it!” Remind us that we can do whatever you direct us to do—not on our own, but with your help. When we are asked if we can do it, let us reply “yes, we can!” Help us to use our gifts and talents fully, that your kingdom of hope, joy, love, and peace may truly come to earth.

We offer special prayers this day for those we have named and for those who remain unnamed in our hearts. Touch each life and situation with the power of your healing and reconciling love. Let each one feel your comforting presence. Flood their lives and ours with hope and peace. We pray for our leaders, that they may do what is right in your eyes. And we pray for ourselves. Challenge us to use our gifts and talents to bring about your holy kingdom here, today. All these things we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, your only son our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying

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, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN “In the Midst of New Dimensions” # 2238

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways,
who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
we your people, ours the journey
now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes,
grant that we, your global village, might envision wider dreams.

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
we your people, ours the journey
now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

We are man and we are woman, all persuasions, old and young,
each a gift in your creation, each a love song to be sung.

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
we your people, ours the journey
now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain,
may your blazing phoenix spirit resurrect the church again.

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,
we your people, ours the journey
now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

BENEDICTION

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways, as stewards of God’s gifts, what risk are we willing to take, what new thing are we willing to do, to insure the survival and growth of God’s church?

And now, until we meet again, may each one be held safely in the palm of God’s hand. Amen.

POSTLUDE

