

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2025**  
**SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY**



**ST. JOHN**  
**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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***Organist – Sharon Banjavcic***

***Liturgy – Global Ministries***

***Ushers –***

(NCH) New Century Hymnal - CCLI LICENSE #11164431

\*Please stand if comfortably able  
and respond with words in **bold** print  
Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts  
are from the **Common English Bible (CEB)**

**SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURE TEXTS**

**Lamentations 1:1-6** The opening six verses sketches eerily unsettling images the desolation of Jerusalem after its destruction.

**2 Timothy 1:1-14** Paul places his complete trust in God.

**Luke 17:5-10** Faith's leveraging capacity against tremendous odds and a sense of our own inadequacy before God. When slavery was still accepted, Jesus continues to define the humility of discipleship.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**PRELUDE: "According to Thy Gracious Word and Let Us Break Bread Together"** Lani Smith

**PENNIES FOR MISSION:**

**OPENING PRAYER: Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel**  
**(El Salvador) Video**

English translation: Dear sisters and brothers in Global Ministries, and on World Communion Sunday with the churches, Disciples of Christ, and the United Church in Christ in the United States. From El Salvador, this sister church, Emmanuel Baptist Church, joins you in this moment of witness. We pray. God of all mercy, who has blessed us in your son Jesus, Messiah, Redeemer, we

want to thank you for all that Jesus has taught us and all that Jesus has bequeathed to us. We are grateful that He exhorts us to remain in this communion of faith and hope, so that we may be one family, one people, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. We believe that your Holy Spirit will make us more fraternal, more of a family, more of your people, to proclaim the precious message of the Kingdom of God on this earth and in this history. Bless all the work and witness of Global Ministries, as well as all its counterparts in Latin America and throughout the world. May honor and glory be to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, Amen.

**\*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

**Written by Rev. Taisaku OBATA (Minister, Ube Church, United Church of Christ in Japan) Translated by Mr. David McIntosh (Overseas Liaison, United Church of Christ in Japan)**

One: In a world that remains divided and in conflict, God is inviting us, to make us one.

**Many: Today we gather around one table, in answer to God's will.**

One: What do we find at today's table?

**Many: God's love, which endures all things and connects all things.**

One: What is not at today's table?

**Many: The many powers of the world, which seek to stand over others.**

One: Let us repent, and give thanks to God's power to bring salvation to all who believe.

**Many: Thanks be to God! Make us witnesses of Your love.**

**All: Let us worship together the true God, who makes us one.**

**\*INVOCATION:**

Holy Assurance,

The cobwebs of doubt spread as we notice divisions and injustices grow. We are uncertain of your presence and have great doubt of the ways you work through us. As we seek your presence among us, clear our minds of the distractions. As mercy blossoms, our doubts will transform to belief. Fill our souls with hope. May we know that your Realm abides around us. Amen.\

**\*OPENING HYMN: 576 "For the Healing of the Nations"**  
**Tune 126 *Regent Square***

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**  
**Spirit of Encouragement,**

**You thrive in our times of doubt. Your work takes root even if the drought of fear destroys our fertile soil. Yet we allow our mistrust of you and our neighbors to**

**disturb our growth. We ask you to increase our faith when we are refusing to cultivate it. Motivate us to seek new ways of exploring our faith. Embolden us to trust even when fear creeps into our minds. Amen.**

**\*WORDS OF GRACE:**

In seasons of drought and rains, God is still giving us the encouragement to grow in faith. Know that through the grace of God, we will continue to find the strength to stretch ourselves and expand our faith.

**\*GLORIA:**

**Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)  
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Lamentations 1:1-6**

**From “the Message”**

**Worthless, Cheap, Abject!**

1 Oh, oh, oh . . .

How empty the city, once teeming with people.

A widow, this city, once in the front rank of nations,  
once queen of the ball, she's now a drudge in the kitchen.

<sup>2</sup> She cries herself to sleep each night, tears soaking her pillow.

No one's left among her lovers to sit and hold her hand.

Her friends have all dumped her.

<sup>3</sup> After years of pain and hard labor, Judah has gone into exile.

She camps out among the nations, never feels at home.

Hunted by all, she's stuck between a rock and a hard place.

<sup>4</sup> Zion's roads weep, empty of pilgrims headed to the feasts.

All her city gates are deserted, her priests in despair.

Her virgins are sad. How bitter her fate.

<sup>5</sup> Her enemies have become her masters. Her foes are living it up

because God laid her low, punishing her repeated rebellions.

Her children, prisoners of the enemy, trudge into exile.

<sup>6</sup> All beauty has drained from Daughter Zion's face.

Her princes are like deer famished for food,  
chased to exhaustion by hunters.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 137 Page 713**

**EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Timothy 1:1-14**

1 From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, to promote the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my dear child.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Thanksgiving and prayer**

<sup>3</sup> I'm grateful to God, whom I serve with a good conscience as my ancestors did. I constantly remember you in my prayers day and night. <sup>4</sup> When I remember your tears, I long to see you so that I can be filled with happiness. <sup>5</sup> I'm reminded of your authentic faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. I'm sure that this faith is also inside you. <sup>6</sup> Because of this, I'm reminding you to revive God's gift that is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled.

Don't be ashamed of the testimony

<sup>8</sup> So don't be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord or of me, his prisoner. Instead, share the suffering for the good news, depending on God's power. <sup>9</sup> God is the one who saved and called us with a holy calling. This wasn't based on what we have done, but it was based on his own purpose and grace that he gave us in Christ Jesus before time began. <sup>10</sup> Now his grace is revealed through the appearance of our savior, Christ Jesus. He destroyed death and brought life and immortality into clear focus through the good news. <sup>11</sup> I was appointed a messenger, apostle, and teacher of this good news. <sup>12</sup> This is also why I'm suffering the way I do, but I'm not ashamed. I

know the one in whom I've placed my trust. I'm convinced that God is powerful enough to protect what he has placed in my trust until that day. <sup>13</sup> Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> Protect this good thing that has been placed in your trust through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

### **\*GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 17:5-10**

<sup>5</sup> The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

<sup>6</sup> The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

<sup>7</sup> "Would any of you say to your servant, who had just come in from the field after plowing or tending sheep, 'Come! Sit down for dinner'? <sup>8</sup> Wouldn't you say instead, 'Fix my dinner. Put on the clothes of a table servant and wait on me while I eat and drink. After that, you can eat and drink'? <sup>9</sup> You won't thank the servant because the servant did what you asked, will you? <sup>10</sup> In the same way, when you have done everything required of you, you should say, 'We servants deserve no special praise. We have only done our duty.'"

### **MESSAGE: "How Much Faith Does a Person Need?"**

I found these two messages difficult to comprehend. First of all, isn't bigger better? Despite 2000+ years

separating the experience of the disciples from ours, their appeal would be right at home in the up-sizing, bigger-better-more culture of today. It's all too easy to notice what we lack rather than to recognize gifts we have already received.

The second part of our scripture text talks about slaves and masters. Today we live in an employee-employer-world so the analogy of slave and master doesn't necessarily fit with us.

So, where are we in the story of Jesus? Jesus is headed toward Jerusalem, healing and teaching on the way. Traveling with him are disciples and apostles (Luke sometimes distinguishes the two. An Apostle is one who is sent out.) Crowds gather, people seek healing, and challengers seek answers. Occasional literary signposts intensify the long shadow of the cross that hovers over the entire journey. Such as last week when Abraham tells the rich man suffering in hell, "If your brothers don't listen to Moses and the prophets, neither would they be convinced, even if someone rose from the dead."

I did not read verses 1-4 of Luke 17 when Jesus challenges the disciples with two statements which can be summarized with 1. Don't be the cause of another's sin or to stumble; 2. Forgive again. Perhaps the disciples found those two statements difficult to do so that's why they thought an increase in their faith might help.

The word *faith* can be translated in Greek as *trust*, *confidence*, or *commitment*. Interesting. Jesus suggests that size does not matter; even a seed of faith holds tree-like potential. Jesus' followers can live and act on the basis of whatever faith is theirs, no matter how small or insignificant it seems. Faith is one of those things that can't be measured. It's not the quantity that matters, it's the quality. And proximity to Jesus does not guarantee unwavering faith.

What is faith? Faith is persistence in reaching out to Jesus (Luke 5:17-26) and trusting in Jesus' power and authority (7:1-10). Faith is responding with love to forgiveness received (7:44-50), not letting fear get the upper hand (8:22-25), and being willing to take risks that challenge the status quo (8:43-48). Faith is giving praise to God (17:11-19), having confidence in God's desire for justice (18:1-8), and being willing to ask Jesus for what we need (18:35-43). As you can see there are many times in the Bible where we can read examples of faith.

It doesn't take much faith to walk through the door of our sanctuary; or sing in the choir, or donate to our missions, or share food to the food pantry, or call or send a card to a shut-in. It's all the faith you need to do these things.

Finally, the part of the scripture concerning the slave and master. If you are an hourly worker, it doesn't matter if you produce more than the boss asked for in

the time you are to work. It doesn't mean you get a bonus. There is nothing that says you have a quota of good deeds you have to do to get into heaven. Many people believe that, however. They have a check list. When you've checked all the boxes, you have won your golden ticket to sit at the throne next to God when you die. It doesn't work like that. You can't buy your way into heaven.

The shocking lesson that all we do, even the hard work we do for God, never for a moment puts God in our debt. How often have you heard it said (and how many more times is it thought): "I've done all this, I've given all that money, I've worked so hard – surely God will be satisfied with that?" The answer is that all genuine service to God is done from gratitude, not to earn anything at all. That means that we must constantly remind ourselves of the great truth: we can never put God in our debt.

So, use whatever little bit of faith you have to do God's will by taking care of God's children. There is no check list.  
Amen

**SPECIAL MUSIC: "When We Gather at the Table" Video  
Trio: Anne Brown, Nancy Eisenhauer, Stacie Pickens**

#### **PASTORAL PRAYER:**

Who's counting, God? Are you? Whether we do one deed or a thousand, it doesn't matter to you God. God says, "just do at least one thing even if its to pray for others. That counts, but who is counting? Not I."

Thank you, gracious God, for opportunities to share with others; whether its food or clothing or a listening ear. Jesus taught us how, and we are grateful. We are grateful for all the blessings you have given us and we will try to use them well by sharing.

Today we pray for all those who are ill, hurting, lonely, sad, grieving, and all those on our prayer list. We pray for all the care givers who use their God given talents to care for others who are in need of a companion.

We pray for all the chaos in our world; if it's not sending bombs to win a war, it's being vengeful to those who disagree with us or who we just don't like. Why is it so hard to love your neighbor?

I ask the congregation to pause for one minute and everyone meditate on love, love, love, and send those thoughts around the world at this very moment.

Jesus taught us to love. Let us pray together his prayer.

#### **OUR LORD'S PRAYER:**

**PRAYER RESPONSE: 772 "Nothing Can Trouble"**  
**Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten,**  
**Those who seek God shall never go wanting.**

**Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten,  
God alone fills us.**

**INVITATION TO GENEROSITY**

As we journey with God, we listen to God's still-speaking voice asking us to have faith in all we share. The Spirit of God asks us to live into our faith as we share our treasures, talents, and time with all of creation.

**OFFERTORY: "Shepherd of Souls" Jerry Van Der Pol**

**\*DOXOLOGY:**

**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**

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION**

Holy Vessel of Endurance,  
When our spirits experience dehydration, you quench our souls. When doubt creeps into our minds, you fill our hearts with your hydrating presence. Encourage us to stretch ourselves in our giving. Help us to see that we have the faith to take movements forward into the future with courage and strength. Amen.

**HOLY COMMUNION:**

Communion Liturgy Today, we join Christians around the world who gather at Christ's table in many languages, cultures, and traditions. On this World Communion Sunday, we remember that though we come from many places, we are one body, sharing one bread and one cup in Christ.

**INVITATION:**

One: Like a sower, God scatters, and God will give growth.

**Many: God scatters life across the earth.**

One: God scatters people in every land and nation.

**Many: God scatters disciples far and wide.**

One: Like a shepherd, God gathers.

**Many: God gathers people into families of faith.**

One: God gathers people into communities of love.

**Many: God gathers people into the body of Christ.**

One: Today, on this World Communion Sunday, God gathers us at one table with disciples of every language, culture, and tradition. From cathedrals and chapels, from huts and houses, from fields and cities, God gathers us in many places and makes us one in Christ.

At this table, we remember the cost of discipleship and rejoice in the richness of Christ's gifts poured out for the whole world. Communion Prayer Creator of the Universe, Maker of mountains and rivers, deserts and

seas, vineyards and wheat fields, we praise you for the life you have given us and for all living things around us!

From the seeds you scattered, you gathered the people of Israel, giving them your covenant and your promise. In the fullness of time, you came to us in Jesus of Nazareth, child of Mary and the Promised One of Israel. We honor his teachings, we weep at his suffering, and we rejoice in his risen life.

With angels and archangels, with our ancestors in faith, and with our brothers and sisters who gather at your table across every continent and island, we ask your blessing on this bread and this cup. May these gifts of Christ's body and blood strengthen us to be the gathered and scattered Church in the world—many in culture and expression, yet one in Spirit, one in truth, one in faith, one in love. Gather your scattered seeds into your home of grace and peace, where all creation is renewed in you.

### **SHARING THE MEAL**

#### **\*UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

**We thank you, generous God, for the nourishment of this table and the living presence of Christ among us. We thank you for the gift of growth and grace in this life-renewing feast. We thank you for the company of your great cloud of witnesses, here in this place, in**

**every land, and throughout the generations. Take your gathered people and scatter us again into the world—renewed, invigorated, and committed—that, so nourished, we may take root and bear life-giving fruit to feed, heal, clothe, and comfort, in Jesus' name. Amen.**

#### **\*CLOSING HYMN: "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"** **Words on the screen.**

#### **\*BENEDICTION:**

Beloved children of God,  
Trust in the faith that abides within you.  
Know that the Spirit will nurture that faith,  
Believe that the Christ will inspire that faith  
And know that our Holy Parent will encourage your faith  
in each stage in life today and always.  
Amen.

#### **BENEDICTION RESPONSE: "Let There Be Peace on Earth"**

#### **THE BELL IS RUNG:**

#### **POSTLUDE: "Triumphal March" Edward Grieg**