

**ALL THY WORKS  
SHALL PRAISE THY  
NAME**



**PARKWAY**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
Sunday, July 11, 2021



[www.parkwayucc.org](http://www.parkwayucc.org)

Sunday, July 11, 2021

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## **Limitless Love | Courageous Action | Spirited Inquiry**

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### **Purpose Statement**

Parkway United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community embracing: spiritual nourishment, open—minded inquiry, courageous action, and interfaith partnerships to fulfill God’s calling to create a just world for all.

### **Congregational Statement**

Parkway United Church of Christ, with God’s grace, seeks to be a congregation that includes all persons, regardless of race, ethnic, or socio—economic background while respecting differences of gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We aspire to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our open and affirming congregation.

## **PARKWAY** UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

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John Nourse, *Pastor Emeritus*

# Welcome to Parkway

**Thank you for joining us this morning.** Please let us know you are here by commenting in the chat.

**Welcome Children.** We invite children to full participation in worship.

**Bell Rung During Lord's Prayer.** A tradition begun when farmers working in surrounding fields would stop their work and join in prayer.

**Subscribe to our email lists:** Text your email address to 22828 or sign up at [www.parkwayucc.org](http://www.parkwayucc.org)

**Communications Requests:** Please use the form at [www.parkwayucc.org/communications](http://www.parkwayucc.org/communications) for all announcements for the bulletin/eNews/website/social media/etc. Bulletin and eNews communications request deadline is noon Monday.

**Cover Photo:** Mona Herberg – Purple Coneflower (Echinacea), Indian Camp Creek Park, Foristell, MO

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## Anniversaries

7/15 MASON, Mike & Lisa (16)

## Birthdays

7/15 MATTEUCCI, Nicky

7/16 WINTER, Jane

7/17 BROWN, Cynthia

7/17 WESSEL, Cindy

# 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday *after* Pentecost

Sunday, July 11, 2021 | 10:00am

**Meditation** *They are the ten commandments, not the ten suggestions.*

**Welcome** Let us know you are here!

**Passing the Peace of Christ**

“May the peace of Christ be with you.”

**Prelude**

**Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell**

**Welcome Song** *Morning Has Broken*

**Morning has broken like the first morning.**

**Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.**

**Praise for the singing, praise for the morning.**

**Praise for them springing fresh from the world.**

**Scripture** Psalm 24 (NRSV - New Revised Standard Version)

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in God's holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation. Such is the company of those who seek God, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that our God of glory may come in. Who is the God of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that our God of glory may come in.

Who is this God of glory? The Lord of hosts, God is the God of glory.

**Call to Worship**

One: Come to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength.

**Many: We will not make any idol that takes Gods' place.**

One: We shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

**Many: We honor God with awe and wonder.**

One: Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

**Many: We honor your parents, grandparents, all ancestors.**

One: Live and love as servants, giving respect to all—as everyone is a sibling.

**Many: We seek reconciliation with each other, and to overcome evil with good.**

One: Honor your commitments and do not turn away from one another. Do not steal or covet what is not your own.

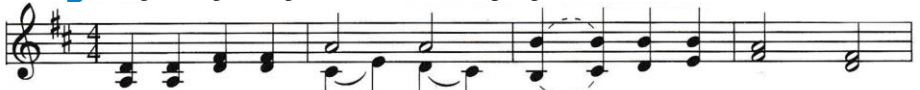
**Many: We are honest in all we do.**

One: Care for those in need and do not give false testimony against our neighbor.

**Many: We always seek to speak the truth.**

**All: Let us worship our God together—Creator, Christ and Spirit.**

**Song** *Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty*



1. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!  
2. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! all the saints a - dore Thee,  
3. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! though the dark-ness hide Thee,  
4. Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! Lord God Al - might - y!



Ear - ly in the morn - ing our song shall rise to Thee;  
Cast - ing down their gold - en crowns a - round the glass - y sea;  
Though the eye of sin - ful-ness Thy glo - ry may not see,  
All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth and sky and sea;



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! mer - ci - ful and might - y!  
Cher - u - bim and ser - a - phim fall - ing down be - fore Thee,  
On - ly Thou art ho - ly; there is none be - side Thee  
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly! mer - ci - ful and might - y!



God in three Per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!  
Who wert, and art, and ev - er - more shalt be.  
Per - fect in power, in love and pu - ri - ty.  
God in three Per - sons, bless - ed Trin - i - ty!

## Opening Prayer

**Holy One, help me keep you first in my life. Help me speak only good things in your name. Help me to focus on you regularly. Help me honor my ancestors. Help me appreciate and protect life. Help me be faithful to those I love. Help me be generous. Help me speak the truth. Help me celebrate the beauty of others. Help me to want to share. Amen.**

## Response *Spirit of the Living God*

**Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me;  
Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.  
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me!  
Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.**

**Children's Time** Children and Youth are invited to separate Zoom classrooms immediately following this Children's Time.

## Blessing the Children *Jesus Love the Little Children*

**Jesus loves the little children,  
All the children of the world.  
Every child in every land,  
Jesus holds them by the hand.  
Jesus loves the little children of the world.**

## Scripture 2Samuel 6: 1-5, 12b-19 (NRSV)

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

It was told King David, 'The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.' So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing. David danced before the LORD with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

They brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt-offerings and offerings of well-being before the LORD. When David had finished offering the burnt-offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts, and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

## Response *Gifts of Love Our Lord Has Given*

(Tune: Lord, I Want To Be a Christian)

**Gifts of love our Lord has given, Words of life: "I'm your God!  
I have brought you out of Egypt; now I call.**

**Listen here, listen well:**

**When you live in gratitude you'll keep my law."**

**"Have no other gods before me, says the Lord God Most High.**

**Don't choose idols that you worship in God's place.**

**Know God's name, use it well.**

**Keep the Sabbath for it is God's gift of grace."**

**"Honor father, honor mother, and rejoice! God will bless you.**

**Take no life, for God loves every child on earth.**

**Celebrate gifts of love;**

**Take to heart what marriage promises are worth."**

**"Do not steal from one another, nor speak lies, hurting others;**

**Do not wish for what your neighbor has in greed."**

**Ten great Words, gifts from God,**

**Help us live in thanks for all we have received.**

## Moment of Silent Reflection

### Sermon

#### Call to Prayer *You Are Mine*



1. — I will come to you in the si - lence, —
2. — I am hope for all who are hope-less, —
3. — I am strength for all the de - spair-ing, —
4. I am the Word that leads all to free - dom, I



I will lift you from — all your fear. —  
I am eyes for all who long to see. In the  
heal - ing for the ones who dwell in shame. —  
I am the peace the world can - not give. —



You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice, be  
shad-ows of the night, I will be your light,  
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free, and  
I will call your name, em - brac - ing all your pain, stand

still and know I am here. \_\_\_\_\_  
 come and rest in \_\_\_\_\_  
 all will know my \_\_\_\_\_  
 up, now walk, and \_\_\_\_\_

1

2-4 *Refrain*

me. \_\_\_\_\_  
 name. \_\_\_\_\_ Do not be a-fraid, I am  
 live! \_\_\_\_\_

with you. I have called you each by name.

Come and fol-low me, I will bring you home; I

love you and you are mine. \_\_\_\_\_

## Pastoral Prayer & Prayers of the People

**Lord's Prayer** sung to the tune by Nate Stout

**Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] 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.**

[A variety of names for God are welcome here – including in the Lord's Prayer.]

## Offering Our Gifts to God

### Offering Interlude

**Response** *Make Me A Servant*

**Make me a servant, humble and meek.  
 Lord, let me lift up those who are weak.  
 And may the prayer of my heart always be:  
 Make me a servant, Make me a servant  
 Make me a servant today...**



## **Prayer of Dedication** Tom Shuman

As we offer our treasure and hearts to you, O God, may they be used to pass on the promise of hope, of peace, of life, of community to all in need of your gifts and presence in their lives. Amen.

## **Song of Parting** *I Have Brought You Out of Egypt*

NETTLETON 8.7.8.7 D (*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

**“I have brought you out of Egypt,” Moses heard the Lord God say.  
“I have saved you! I have freed you! people, listen and obey.  
Have no other gods before me; don’t make idols for yourselves.  
I will judge those who reject me; worship me and no one else.”**

**“Do not use the Lord’s name wrongly,  
use God’s name for what is good.  
Keep the Sabbath; keep it holy; rest and worship as you should.  
Honor father, honor mother; do not murder! Honor life!  
Do not wander to another from your husband or your wife.”**

**God continued these commandments:**

**“Do not steal another’s things;  
And you shall not bear false witness—  
see the anguish that it brings.  
Do not seek with bitter longing what you see across the street.  
Keep these laws and find within them  
where my love and justice meet.”**

**God of grace, we see your promise in the covenant you give.  
For your law is wise and wondrous as it shows us how to live.  
Loving God and loving neighbor, may we follow where you call.  
Saved by grace, may we together seek to live your gracious law.**

## **Benediction**

### **God’s Light Goes Forth**

### **Music for Going Forth**



**You are invited to the reopening of  
Parkway United Church of Christ  
In-Person Worship Services  
Beginning July 18, 2021 at 10:00am**

The PUCC Council and the PUCC Covid Team are delighted to welcome back our church family and guests to in-person worship services with the following safeguards.

- **Masks required (regardless of vaccination status)**
- **Elbow bumps encouraged**
- **Sign-in for contact information**
- **Sit every other pew in a family pod**
- **Sing and speak with masks in place**
- **Restrooms available**
- **Nursery open but not staffed**
- **Sunday School held outside or in Fellowship Hall**
- **Nametags encouraged**
- **All surfaces will be sanitized before service**
- **Limited Outdoor Fellowship following the service with water bottles provided**

As we transition back to fully opening at PUCC, we will keep you updated on procedures. By September we hope to ease up on some safeguards.

While we look forward to being together again, some of us are not ready to resume in-person meetings. Worship services will continue to be livestreamed on Facebook and/or recorded on YouTube.

**Questions or concerns?**

Contact Kevin Cameron: 314-872-9330 | [kevin@parkwayucc.org](mailto:kevin@parkwayucc.org)

# Announcements

## Today! Speaker Series—Impressions of Norway

Presented by Kristen (daughter of Mike & Peggy)

Sunday, July 11 | 11:15am | via Zoom (see June 27 for link)

Another young person returns to her home church to educate and entertain us. She is Kristen Mohl, who resides in Norway with her spouse and children. And therein lies the source of our genuine interest in Kristen and her life abroad. Norway is not the typical place one would expect an American from the Midwest to permanently reside. Kristen has a story to tell, not only about things unique to her, but also her impressions and observations about Norway. Those of us, who did not embark on a life beyond our home country, likely have many stereotypical views of what we think about Norway. Kristen will set us straight and provide a fascinating account of this unique land and her life there. This is not so much a travel log, as it is an account of a journey to a unique place and what she discovered.

Contact Richard Scherrer: 90fivetpr@gmail.com | (314) 993-5210

### Zoom link for Summer Speaker Series:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84691476997?pwd=aEM2ZURYWURLNmkwD0EzV0VHV1lyQT09>

**Meeting ID:** 846 9147 6997 | **Passcode:** 181565

**Dial in** (312) 626-6799

## In-Person Tuesday Evening Dialogue July 13

We are excited to announce TED will return to in person meetings in the Heritage Room starting on Tues July 13 at 6 pm! We'll be wrapping up our discussion of *The Heart's Invisible Furies* from page 423 to the end of the book.

Since this will be our first time back we need to be aware of and follow these Parkway Covid procedures:

- Wear a mask and enter the building through the Back Entrance aka PUNS/Harper School/Miriam entrance located to the left of the entrance by Pastor Kevin's office/Music Room.
- There is a keypad there just like the front door. Contact Helen for the access code. Heritage Room will be just down the hall on the left.
- Once inside the Heritage Room you can take off your mask providing you are vaccinated.
- Bring food to share or your own food. We will eat and visit with each other for the first hour then start book discussion at 7pm.
- We will all clean off the tables before and after use.

We hope to offer virtual Zoom sessions in the future during the in-person TED meetings. Questions? Contact Helen Race: raceh@att.net | (314) 401-4382

## Tuesday Afternoon Dialogue—July 20

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays | 2:00pm | via ZOOM

Join us as we discuss Psalms 13, 23, and 32 and the related chapters in the book *Great Psalms of the Bible* by Clint McCann. This book works well for summer, as each week's topics do not build on the prior weeks. We hope to see you.

**Video:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83670617428?pwd=bUxPZEdDMlU4ay9oNndTWw4yZUYwUT09>

**Join by phone:** 312 626 6799 | **Meeting ID:** 836 7061 7428 | **Passcode:** 480007

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors thru July 22

Parkway UCC continues to serve our long-time outreach midtown ministry, Isaiah 58. Socks and underwear for all sizes and ages are being requested by this ministry for a 24 July Carnival, (raincheck on 31 July). Parkway UCC is also contributing a special requested bulk item as a separate gift. There will be an opportunity to donate school supplies later in the summer during the August Back-to-School sales. As you are able, please consider placing socks and underwear in the designated box in the church lobby and/or add to monthly food pantry donations now through 22 July. Thanks in advance. Questions? Contact Evelyn Buretta at [burettaevelyn@gmail.com](mailto:burettaevelyn@gmail.com)

## The Other Side of the Hill Documentary

Virtual Screening July 10 - July 25th

*Other Side of the Hill* is a new film that will be available this summer through IPL for free congregational screenings and individual viewing at home between July 10-25. Where can East & West, Republicans & Democrats, find the common ground needed to address climate change? How can industry and environmentalists work hand in hand? And how can local economies find opportunity in a lower emissions future?

No matter where you are located this important story will inspire you to reach out and bridge the divide. We are more alike than we are different.

*Other Side of the Hill* explores the impacts of a changing climate in rural Eastern Oregon – as seen through the eyes of local leaders on the ground. From innovative timber operations to large scale solar, our film amplifies the voices of rural communities often left unheard, and shines a light on stories of progress & hope. In a time of unprecedented cultural divide between rural and urban communities, we find common ground in an urgency to address a changing landscape. The film is 30 minutes long.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR FREE ONLINE SCREENING JULY 10-25.  
<https://interfaithpowerandlight.salsalabs.org/trpfilm2021...>

WATCH THE TRAILER HERE:

<https://vimeo.com/403409317>

Contact Polly Rutherford: [pollyrutherford@gmail.com](mailto:pollyrutherford@gmail.com)

## Habitat For Humanity Double your gift with Spire

Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis has partnered with Spire to build affordable housing in St. Louis...and you can help. From June 1st through July 30th, your gift to our local office will be matched dollar for dollar by Spire up to \$50,000. Together, we could raise a total of \$100,000!

**Where you send your gift is important!** Only gifts sent to our local office in St. Louis will qualify for the Spire Match. And remember...100% of your gift given directly to Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis stays in our local economy, building homes for people right here in our community.

Thank you for helping Habitat Saint Louis make the most of this opportunity to build more homes, stronger communities, and lots of hope in St. Louis.

Contact Tom McKenzie: [mckenzie1947@att.net](mailto:mckenzie1947@att.net)

**Donate:** <https://www.habitatstl.org/summer-appeal/>

## July 2021 Alzheimer's News

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of aducanumab (Aduhelm™) from Biogen — the first drug to slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease — is a milestone in the treatment of the disease and a beginning of a completely new future for Alzheimer's treatments. This treatment, while not a cure, is pivotal and current progress in science is significant. We expect this will be the first of a number of treatments to come.

As a new type of Alzheimer's treatment, aducanumab addresses the disease in a way that has never been done before. This therapy slows progression of the disease, rather than only addressing symptoms.

This infusion treatment will reduce the buildup of amyloid plaques, one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's in the brain. Thus, giving the patient more time to enjoy family and doing things they like in the early stages of the disease. It does require early diagnosis from a qualified doctor or neurologist. And the diagnosis must be Alzheimer's, not dementia.

Early detection in Alzheimer's disease is more important now than ever with a treatment available. Early diagnosis has long demonstrated better health outcomes for individuals and their caregivers. If you or a loved one is experiencing memory changes, the Alzheimer's Association strongly encourages speaking with a health care provider for a thorough evaluation, diagnosis and to discuss treatment options.

You can learn more by going to [www.alz.org/help-support/resources](http://www.alz.org/help-support/resources) or the Alzheimer's Helpline which is accessible 24/7 via 800-272-3900 and staffed by master's level clinicians to assist with crisis situations, decision making, and disease information. You can find virtual dementia caregiver resources online at [alz.org/covid19help](http://alz.org/covid19help). Tools and support are also available in Spanish.

Want to learn more about the Alzheimer's Association and what they do here in St. Louis? Visit [alz.org](http://alz.org) and/or contact PUC's Faith Outreach Ambassador with the Alzheimer's Association, Joyce Ruiz at [joyceruiz7@gmail.com](mailto:joyceruiz7@gmail.com).

# Prayer List

as of Wednesday, July 7, 2021

## Celebrations

All the acts of kindness, justice and equity near and far!  
Independence Day – 4<sup>th</sup> of July!

## Concerns

**Ellie Svenson** - recuperating from knee replacement surgery.  
**Dan & Kim, Ben/Henry/Davis Weas** - Dan's cancer treatments.  
**Marsha Peek's mother Norma** - healing and comfort fall and surgery.  
**All impacted by Covid-19** - individuals, families, healthcare workers.  
... if anyone needs groceries, medicine and/or other support OR if anyone newly vaccinated would like to be part of the Care Team, please reach out to kevin@parkwayucc.org; 314-330-0629.  
**Gun violence and other violence across the US and other lands.**  
**Grieving families & rescue workers** in Miami after condo collapse.

## Continuing

**Peter Shelton** - healing at home after recent surgery.  
**Larry & Joan Brannigan** - healing from his heart surgery.  
**Ellie & Skip Larson** - as she settles into a care unit at Meramec Bluffs.  
**Christopher, Gail & Bill Haack** - chronic health challenges.  
**Jim Winkelmann's mother Val Weber** - healing from back injury.  
**Rochelle Smith Family & SLU** - grieving/giving thanks for Jonathan.  
**Sue Hanson** - strength, stamina, healing through health challenges.  
**John** - receiving hospice care at home (lifelong friend of Winkelmanns).  
**Edwin** - in midst of cancer (spouse of Maria, care giver of Joe Runtz).  
**Brian** - healing at home; dbl lung transplant due to COVID (Tossing).  
**Al & Cindy** - healing from car accident (Tarr).  
**Cherie & Mike Stolze** - her health; her father's kidney disease.  
**Lori Connors** - for strength, stamina through health challenges.  
**Ruth Peace & Pinky Wilcoxon** - PUCC sisters with health challenges.  
**Bill Darland** - ongoing health issues.  
**Maria Hendrix and Denise Hein** (Stifel).  
**Carolyn & Hank Kraichley** - serious health challenges.  
**Anthony** - multiple challenges as he lives his post-incarceration life.  
**Gary** - risky behaviors; seeking balance and stability.  
**Grateful Tran** - half-way house, new skills, schizophrenia (Buretta).  
**Bob** - continues to struggle with Parkinson's.  
**The extended Eggebrecht Family** - healing and wholeness.  
**Marthoma** - welcoming their new Achen - Rev Thomas Mathew.

## Home/Care Facility/Rehab Center

**Millicent Guerri** - living with cancer... 14300 Conway Meadows Ct E, Chesterfield, MO 63017 [birthdate: December 5]  
**Marv Herpel** - *Brookdale West County*; 785 Henry Ave, #217; Ballwin, MO 63021; 636-227-5838 [birthdate: March 3]

**Pat Klein** - *Anthology Senior Living of Wildwood*; 251 Plaza Dr, #325; Wildwood, MO 63040 [birthdate: September 21]

**Bill Klein** - *Anthology Senior Living of Wildwood*; 251 Plaza Dr, #104; Wildwood, MO 63040 [birthdate: March 8]

**John and Audrey Nourse** - *The Village at Cape Albeon*  
3300 Lake Bend Dr; St. Louis, MO 63088; 636-861-3200  
[birthdates: Audrey - December 19; John - October 26]

**Pearl Sellenriek** - *Friendship Village Memory Care Division #1001*;  
15250 Olive Blvd, Chesterfield, MO 63017 [birthdate: March 31]

**Sue Houser** - *Bethany Ctr for Rehab & Healing*; 421 Ocala Dr - #209B;  
Nashville, TN 37211; 615-577-2049. [birthdate: July 8]

## **Other**

**Pres Biden, VP Harris, Congress**, all local, national, world leaders.

**The “me too” Movement** - shining a light on sexual abuse.

**All people who live with mental illness.**

**Individuals in all levels of leadership** as they make decisions today.

**PUCC Family** (and others) struggling with healthcare costs and limits.

**Our Missouri Mid-South Conference and St Louis Assn UCC**

**Variety of Parkway members/friends** - employment issues.

**Conversations about the Death Penalty** in the United States.

**Victims of Natural and Created Disasters** around the world.

**Peace and Justice** near and far.

**Healing of relationships between the public and the police.**

**US Military** around the globe.

**The people of politically unstable countries across the globe.**

**Peace in the Mid-East.**

## **St Louis Assn UCC Covenant Partner**

*Week ending July 4* - **Parkway UCC**, St Louis; parkwayucc.org

*Week ending July 11* - **Pilgrim Congregational UCC**, St. Louis;

pilgrimucc-stl.org

# 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday *after* Pentecost

July 11, 2021

## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

God-inspired Joy

Last year at this time, several months into the COVID pandemic and not an end in sight, Rev. Rebekah Moyer of Emmanuel UCC, in Allentown, PA was in search of joy. She thought wistfully of the joy that she experienced at Christmas, and wondered if others might want that joy, too. So, she and the congregation she serves initiated Christmas In July.

Pastor Becky, as she is known, said in her sermon that day “I thought about all of the hustle and bustle that goes along with the Christmas season and all of the chaos that comes during that season. I also thought about how quickly baby Jesus is packed away and our Christmas “high” is taken away. ...As I was reflecting on all of this I couldn’t help but think to myself: After the Christmas holiday is over, how many of us put Christ back in a shoe box? I started to wonder what happens to Christmas if we take away the ribbons and the bows. If we forget about Santa Claus and decorating Christmas trees. If we don’t have to worry about baking cookies or pies or serving extravagant dinners. If we don’t have to worry about running around looking for the perfect Christmas present. If we don’t have to worry about the lines we usually have to stand in at the store and the irritated faces of strangers when you take the last of whatever the “popular” present is that year. If we get rid of the frustration of wrapping gifts. And I thought that maybe, just maybe, July is an opportunity for us. Perhaps we can forget all of the extra stuff that we have added to the season and really celebrate Christ. We can celebrate what the birth of Christ really means to us without the commercialization, without the pressures that come along with everything surrounding Christmas. ...I was reminded that, although the nights are short and the weather is warm, we need that light and that hope. We need that joy that comes with hearing the story of the baby lying in the manger all of the time. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that the Christmas story does not belong in a box, tucked away somewhere safe. I think we need to hear the miracle of the birth of Christ throughout the year. Have you put Jesus in a box in a closet, attic, or basement with the Christmas stuff? Have you packed him away with the palm fronds and the Easter decorations? Is your joy for the Savior on layaway with the gifts you have set aside for December? Elizabeth and Mary were filled with so much joy that they could not hold it in. Mary’s pregnancy, her child, brought the One who would reshape the world, the One who would confront injustice and deliver new hope, the very presence of God. It is time for us to find him again, the baby in the manger. It is time for us to find joy. The most wonderful news, he is always looking for you, waiting for you. Christmas joy is not a single day or month. It is for us, followers of Christ, a way of life.”