

Towson United Methodist Church

September 20, 2026 : 17th Sunday after Pentecost

Register your attendance by [clicking here](#). Share prayer requests by [clicking here](#).

Prelude “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian” arr. Evelyn R. Larter Christopher Kiser, organ

Greeting Rev. Stephanie Roberts White

*Call to Worship from umcdiscipleship.org

In times of busyness and stress
when we feel surrounded by challenges on all sides...

**We gather to learn to strive side by side
with one mind for the faith of the gospel.**

In times of joy and rest when we feel the goodness of God’s provision and
abundance deep in our bones...

**We gather to learn to strive side by side
with one mind for the faith of the gospel.**

In times of conflict and distress when we feel just how hard it is to live in unity
together...

**We gather to learn to strive side by side
with one mind for the faith of the gospel.**

Disciples of Christ, come,
let us worship God who empowers us to press on...

**As we learn to strive side by side
with one mind for the faith of the gospel. Amen!**

*Opening Hymn “Stand Up and Bless the Lord” UMH #662

Stand up and bless the Lord, ye people of his choice;
stand up and bless the Lord your God with heart and soul and voice.

Though high above all praise, above all blessing high,
who would not fear his holy name, and laud and magnify?

O for the living flame from his own altar brought,
to touch our lips, our minds inspire, and wing to heaven our thought!

God is our strength and song, and his salvation ours;
then be his love in Christ proclaimed with all our ransomed powers.

Stand up and bless the Lord; the Lord your God adore;
stand up and bless his glorious name, henceforth forevermore.

*Opening Prayer

Mike Steer, liturgist

Lord, who lifts us up, reside in our hearts today. Help us to listen closely for your word to us. Remind us that you are always with us, throughout all of our lives. Give us confidence in your presence, so that we may go into your world ready to witness to your love through our works and our deeds, for we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

from umcdiscipleship.org

Anthem
Choir

"Arms Opened Wide" by Howard Helvey

Chancel

*Arms opened wide to the needs of the neighbor;
Eyes opened wide by the wonders of God's will;
Daring to venture on pathways uncharted,
We move in faith that our God is speaking still.*

*Doors opened wide as a bold sign of welcome;
Minds opened wide to the meanings of God's call:
"No longer alien or stranger or outcast –
My holy house is a house of prayer for all."*

*Hopes opened wide toward the light of the future,
Hearts opened wide by the blessings of our past,
We pledge our lives to God's promise unfolding:
That love and justice shall fill the earth at last!*

Children's Moment

Announcements

Invitation to Confession

We continue to believe that we must earn our way into God's heart.
But God's grace is given to each of us, for all of us,
freely, unconditionally, always.
Let us open our lives to this mercy as we pray.

Prayer of Confession

from umcdiscipleship.org

It seems we cannot decide, O, God.
We say we will live to serve others, but end up meeting only our needs.
We claim to live in a way that honors Christ,
but we do not take him to work, school, home.
We believe that the gospel can transform lives,
(at least, for those who need it - not us). Forgive us, Presence of Peace.
Instead of grumblers,
may we be ambassadors of grace.
Instead of continual complaining,
may we carry compassion to the hurting.
Instead of whiners,
may we be workers with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior,
to reach out and bring the kingdom of God to everyone we meet.
Pray in silence. Confessing your sins to God.

Assurance of Pardon

This is the good news: there is no ranking in God's kingdom. God graces everyone with the same gifts: mercy, restoration, new life.
God has kept the covenant. We have been forgiven,
we have been made new people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of Praise

“My Jesus, I Love Thee”

UMH #172

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine; for thee all the follies of sin I resign.

My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love thee because thou hast first loved me,
and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;
I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Grace in Action

Invitation to the Offering

Thank you for your support of Towson United Methodist Church. If you would like to support the church financially today, you can drop your gift in the offering plate as it comes around. You can also give online at towsonchurch.org/give or you can mail checks to the church.

Offering Prayer

from umcdiscipleship.org

Steadfast God, for us to live is Christ. In every season, you hold us, and in every struggle, you knit us together as one body. Receive these gifts as signs that we choose to stand firm, striving side by side, living as citizens of your kingdom. Use what we offer to encourage the weary, strengthen your church, and bear witness that love is stronger than fear. Shape our common life to be worthy of the gospel, until our unity itself proclaims your grace. Amen.

Offertory

“'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

arr. Joan Pinkston

*Doxology

UMH #95

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

Enlighten us, O God, by your Spirit, in the understanding of your Word, and grant us the grace to receive it in true fear and humility. Amen.

The Epistle Reading

Philippians 1:21-30

NRSVUE

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet I cannot say which I will choose. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that, by my presence again with you, your boast might abound in Christ Jesus because of me.

Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel and in no way frightened by those opposing you. For them, this is evidence of their destruction but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well, since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Sermon

"The Struggle in Christ"

Rev. Stephanie Roberts White

Pastoral Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

*Closing Hymn “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”

TFWS #2153

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!

*Benediction

Postlude

“Rigaudon”

by André Campra

Announcements

Heavenly Haven, a nontraditional worship for those who struggle in ordinary worship services, will start on Sunday, Sept. 20th, 2:00 PM at [Perry Hall UMC](#) led by Rev. Margery Schammel. Worship will be from 2-2:30 PM followed by a time of social connection from 2:30 - 3 PM for those who wish to do so. This service is very flexible and will evolve as we figure out what is helpful for those attending. *If you cannot attend today but are interested in future dates, please let [Pastor Stephanie](#) know.*

Leadership Board Meeting: September 21, 6:30 PM

Parents’ Night Out: September 25; 5:30 - 8:30! Pre-k - 5th grade. Email [Lissa](#) and let her know you are coming!

Mixtape Live! by Harmonia Festival Choir September 26, 2026 FREE!

"Mixtape Live," will feature your favorite classics, reimagined! Come hear iconic songs by Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Dolly Parton, The Beatles, and more in fresh, high energy choral arrangements. [Click here](#) for more information.

Brown Bag Book Club: September 27, after worship. We'll be reading *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi. Bring your own lunch and book and have fun discussing this bestseller! No registration required. All are welcome! *From the publisher: One spring morning, a stranger named Theo arrives in the small Southern city of Golden. He doesn't explain much about where he came from or why he's there—but when he visits the local coffeehouse, where pencil portraits of the people of Golden hang on the walls, he begins purchasing them, one at a time, and giving each portrait to the person depicted. In exchange, he asks only for the person's story. And so portrait by portrait, person by person, secrets are revealed, regrets are shared, and ordinary lives are profoundly altered. A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, Theo of Golden is an unforgettable novel about the power of generosity, the importance of connection, and the quiet miracles that happen when we choose kindness and wonder.*

Brian Wilson Tribute Concert September 27, 2 PM, Enjoy great music at [Perry Hall UMC](#) by talented singers and musicians honoring Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys!

Mission of the Month: Food for Thought Food for Thought has a mission to fill backpacks or bags with food, deliver them to a school during the week and allow the students to take the bag for the weekend, and return it on Monday! Towson UMC is collecting funds that will help our team purchase food for these children. You can give by [clicking here](#). Click "give securely here" and open the "Fund" drop down menu, then select "mission of the month."

The Hospitality Team is looking for bakers to contribute goodies for coffee hour. If interested, please sign up in the parlor.

Wednesday evening choir rehearsals: Handbells meet from 6:15 - 7:15 PM and the Chancel Choir meets from 7:30 - 9 PM in the music room (321). If interested in joining a choir, please contact [Christopher Kiser](#).

Sunday school for all ages

Children (preschool - fifth grade, meeting in the Fellowship Hall) will be exploring how we can have Faith in God! We'll learn how God Shows Us Compassion, God Cares for Us, and how God Helps Us Face Challenges.

Our youth (ages 6th - 12th grades, room 313) will be using "Connecting Faith and Justice: Youth Lectionary Curriculum." This is a resource designed to help young people explore the intersection of faith and justice. Rooted in scripture, this curriculum connects biblical teachings to the world around us and with the 2025–2028 Social Principles, offering engaging lessons that encourage students to actively reflect on how their faith calls them to take action in the world.

Adults meet in room 216.

Sermon Series: *The Secret of Life: Paul's Christ Centered Philosophy in Philippians*

(book by F. Scott Spencer). September 20 - The Struggle in Christ: 1:21-30

September 27 - The Story of Christ: 2:1-13

October 4: World Communion Sunday - The Stretch Toward Christ: 3:4b-14

October 11 - The Strength of Christ Philippians 4:4-9

Children's Choir The Children's Choir rehearses Sundays from 4:15-5:00 PM and helps lead music in the 10:15 AM worship service approximately once per month. Open to children in Kindergarten through 5th grade. Children will learn to sing, play handchimes, and other instruments. The cost to participate is \$15, which includes a choir T-shirt.

Genesis Ringers The Genesis Ringers rehearse Sundays from 3:00-4:00 PM. This handbell choir is designed for those with little or no previous experience reading music or playing handbells. Open to anyone 6th grade through adults. No audition

is required. The Genesis Ringers will occasionally participate in the 10:15 AM worship service as the group develops.

Other Musical Opportunities: Do you sing or play an instrument? Would you like to join the Ukulele Choir? We would love to hear from you! There are many ways to share your musical gifts beyond our regular ensembles, including special music, instrumental or vocal solos, small ensembles, and other worship opportunities. Contact [Christopher Kiser](#) to learn more or to express your interest in being involved in our music ministry.

Youth Group News (Grades 6 - 12):

TODAY: after worship; parent/youth info meeting regarding Ignite 2027 (January 22-24, Ocean City, MD)

Sept 27 11:30-12:30 Lunch, Youth *AND Young Adult* Presentation and Interactive activity regarding mental health presented by King Health Systems

Thursday Bible study: 11 AM, 216; We are using the book *The Secret of Life: Paul's Christ-Centered Philosophy in Philippians* by F. Scott Spencer. Two books are available from the church for \$19. For September 24, please read chapter 3.

A Celebration of Hymns: Duets for Piano and Organ featuring Kathie Metz and Christopher Kiser. Sunday, October 11, 2026, 4:00 PM. *Free concert followed by light reception.*

Step Away Crafting Day: October 17; 9 AM - 4 PM

Join us in God's Crafting Studio (room 310) to enjoy free time crafting! Pick up that project you put aside "for another day." The Sew Blessed team will provide a tasty treat. All are welcome! Stay all day or drop in for part of the day!

Looking for an AA, NA, GA, or Al-Anon meeting? [Click here](#) for a complete schedule.