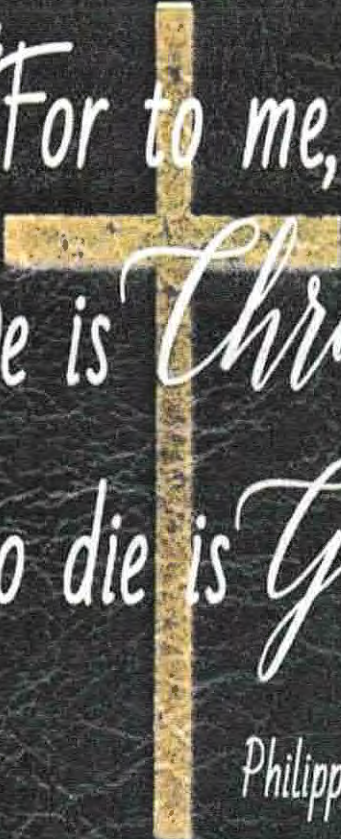


Immanuel Congregational
United Church of Christ

A wooden cross is centered on a black leather-textured background. The cross is made of two weathered wooden beams. The text is written in a white, elegant script font, with the word "Christ" in a larger, more decorative script.

*"For to me,
to live is Christ
and to die is Gain."*

Philippians 1:21



IMMANUEL CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST
1 Hovey Street • Oxford, MI 48371
www.icucc.org • 248-628-1610
September 20, 2026 • 11:00 a.m.



Welcome to worship at Immanuel United Church of Christ!

God is Still Speaking,

Immanuel Open and Affirming Statement:

We welcome and affirm all people in celebrating diversity. We welcome to our faith family people of every race, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability and those who have doubts or questions.

Thank You for taking the time to turn off your cell phone during the worship service.

Prelude

*Bringing in the Light of Christ

(* denotes those who are able may stand.)

Ring of the Bell

Welcome

Jeff Erno

Choir Anthem "Seek Ye First"

Immanuel Choir

Children Message

Pastor Liz Wilson

***Call to Worship**

Mary Beth Wiechert, Liturgist

One: For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Many: I eagerly expect and hope that in nothing I shall be put to shame.

One: Whether by life or by death, Christ will be magnified in my body.

Many: For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

One: We continue in joy and in faith.

Many: May our conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

One: We will stand firm in one Spirit, contending as one for the faith of the gospel.

Many: For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Invocation

Jeff Erno

Gracious and loving God, we give thanks for the many ways we see your abiding presence throughout scripture and within our own lives. You hear not only our praise, but also our complaints. Teach us to hear our own grumbling as a signifier to redirect our thoughts and lives to gratitude and generosity. In hearing our own complaints, may we look to Christ Jesus for examples of grace, and may we follow your Holy Spirit to offer presence to one another, as we walk in faith together. Amen.

***Hymn: "Blessed Assurance"**

Page 2

Words of Assurance

Jeff Erno

God hears our concerns and responds with grace and compassion, offering a guiding presence. Jesus calls us to celebrate grace and the gift of life, not just for ourselves, but within the lives of others. Know this: In all things, the Lord hears us, sees us, and loves us just as we are. In the name of Jesus, we are forgiven and have everlasting life.

Acts 17:30-31; Rev. 7:9-14

Fanny Crosby, 1873; alt.



1 Bless-ed as - sur - ance, Je - sus is mine! O what a
 2 Per - fect sub - mis - sion, per - fect de - light! Vi - sions of
 3 Per - fect sub - mis - sion, all is at rest, I in my



fore - taste of glo - ry di - vine! Heir of sal - va - tion, pur - chase of
 rap - ture now burst on my sight; An - gels de - scend - ing, bring from a -
 Sav - ior am hap - py and blessed; Watch - ing and wait - ing, look - ing a -



God, born of the Spir - it, washed in Christ's blood.
 have ech - oes of mer - cy, whis - pers of love
 have. filled with God's good - ness, lost in Christ's love.



Refrain



This is my sto - ry, this is my song, prais - ing my Sav - ior all the day long;



This is my sto - ry, this is my song, prais - ing my Sav - ior all the day long.



After hearing Phoebe Knapp play this tune on the piano, Fanny Crosby composed the poem on the spot. In her almost 95 years, Crosby wrote more than 8,500 gospel hymns and songs.

From *The New Century Hymnal*,
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Tune: ASSURANCE 1st.
 Phoebe P. Knapp, 1873

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

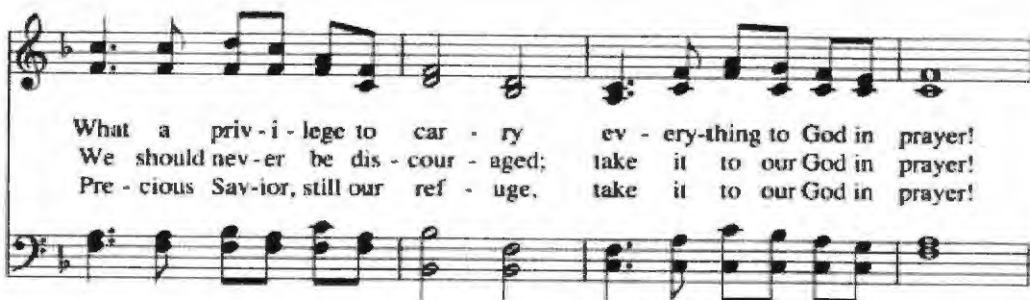
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Joseph Scriven, 1855, alt

Phil. 4:6-7



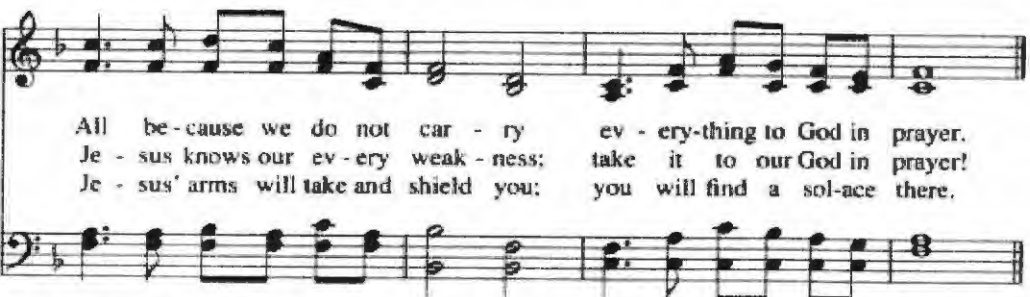
1 What a friend we have in Je - sus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
 2 Have we tri - als and temp - ta - tions? Is there trou - ble an - y - where?
 3 Are we weak and heav - y lad - en, bur - dened with a load of care?



What a priv - i - lege to car - ry ev - ery-thing to God in prayer!
 We should nev - er be dis - cour - aged; take it to our God in prayer!
 Pre - cious Sav - ior, still our ref - uge, take it to our God in prayer!



Oh, what peace we of - ten for - feit, oh, what need - less pain we bear.
 Can we find a friend so faith - ful, who will all our sor - rows share?
 Do your friends de - spise, for - sake you? Take it to our God in prayer!



All be - cause we do not car - ry ev - ery-thing to God in prayer.
 Je - sus knows our ev - ery weak - ness; take it to our God in prayer!
 Je - sus' arms will take and shield you; you will find a sol - ace there,

No stranger to sorrow himself, Joseph Scriven wrote this hymn to comfort his mother in Ireland. Scriven, who moved to Canada as a young man, attempted to follow literally the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

Tune: ERIE 8.7.8.7.D.
 Charles C. Converse, 1868

The Congregation Prays

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Mary Beth Wiechert, Liturgist

Congregational Response: "Lord hear our prayers." (Response after each Prayer request)

Silent Meditation

Pastoral Prayer

Jeff Erno

The Lord's Prayer: (use words most comfortable for you)

Mary Beth Wiechert, Liturgist

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.

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 18:1-6

Philippians 1:21-30

1 Corinthians 15:54-58

Mary Beth Wiechert, Liturgist

Page 497 Old Testament

Pages 196 & 197 New Testament

Page 177 New Testament

Sermon: "To Live Is Christ; To Die Is Gain"

Jeff Erno

***Hymn: "What A Friend We Have In Jesus"**

Page 4

Stewardship Message

Announcements

(Be sure to read about up-coming events in the back of the bulletin.)

Offering:

Offertory

***Doxology:** (The tune is found on page 356 of your red hymnal.)

PRAISE GOD, FROM WHOM ALL BLESSINGS FLOW...

PRAISE GOD, ALL CREATURES HERE BELOW...

PRAISE GOD, ABOVE, YOU HEAVENLY HOST...

CREATOR, CHRIST AND HOLY GHOST...AMEN.

Prayer of Dedication of Gifts and Self

Jeff Erno

We offer these gifts, O God, in gratitude for your provision in our lives. We offer tangible gifts of money, where we are able, and tangible gifts of our time, our prayers, our service, and our witness to your abundant grace. Amen

***Hymn: "Just As I Am"**

Page 5

***The Light of Christ goes into the world**

***Benediction:**

Jeff Erno

One: Go now in the name of the God who goes before us

Many: We go forth in the name of Christ, whose love and grace abound within us

One: Go seeking the Spirit to a place beyond complaint

Many: We go forth knowing in life or death, nothing can separate us from God

ALL: AMEN

Please wait to exit unit after the recessional.

Grace for fellowship hour

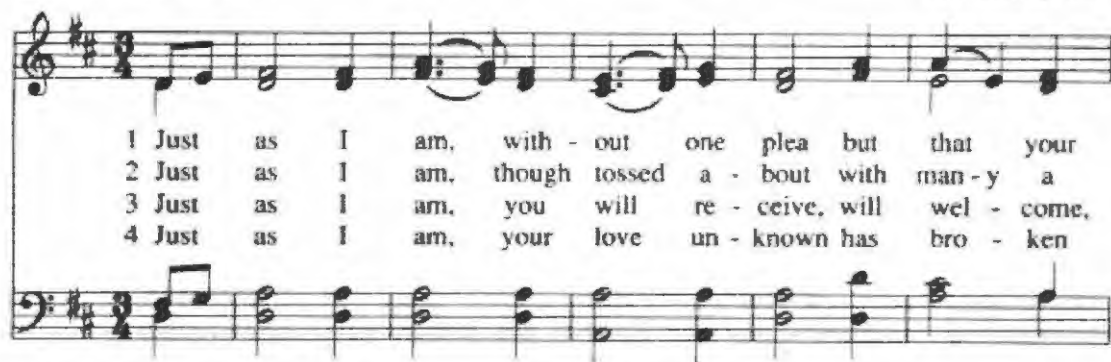
Jeff Erno

Just as I Am

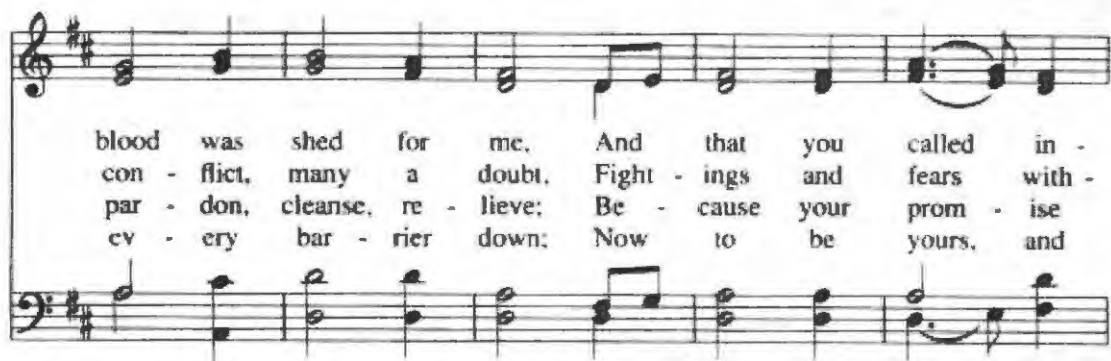
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Charlotte Elliott, 1836, alt.

John 6:37; Eph. 2:14



1 Just as I am, with - out one plea but that your
 2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y a
 3 Just as I am, you will re - ceive, will wel - come,
 4 Just as I am, your love un - known has bro - ken



blood was shed for me, And that you called in -
 con - flict, many a doubt, Fight - ings and fears with -
 par - don, cleanse, re - lieve; Be - cause your prom - ise
 ev - ery bar - rier down; Now to be yours, and



vit - ing me, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
 in, with - out, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
 I be - lieve, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
 yours a - lone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

This text appeared in Charlotte Elliott's *Invalids' Hymn Book*, published in England in 1836. Disabled at age thirty, she continued a career of writing and editing. This hymn has been translated into many languages.

Tune: WOODWORTH L.M.
 William B. Bradbury, 1849

*Postlude

*We scatter to serve******

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Join together for refreshments in Fellowship

In Worship and Service Today

Sermon: Jeff Erno

Liturgist: Mary Beth Wiechert

Children's Message: Pastor Liz Wilson

Choir Director: Ken Martin

Accompanist: Ann McKinley

Our Tech team: Tammy & Ken Martin

Floral Arrangements: A gift created by Amy Wilson

Ministers: All the Immanuel Church faith community

Sunday School: Amy Wilson, Liz Wilson, Susanne Waldrep

Church Officers & Staff

Moderator: Ken Martin

Vice Moderator: TBA

Treasurer: Art Nagasaki

Council Secretary: Susanne Waldrep

Clerk: Susanne Waldrep

Church Secretary: Sue Molczyk

Building & Grounds Team Leader: TBA



Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost

September 20, 2026

The Good & the Better

Jonathan Edwards, who is widely regarded as an important American theologian and philosopher, once remarked that too many Christians live like distracted travelers who stay at a hotel on their way to a destination but never move on to the place they are heading. His point was that we have such an attachment to our present lives and the pleasures we enjoy today that we can, without necessarily meaning to, live as if heaven does not exist. We can act like the newlyweds who sit in the lobby of their hotel for hours, waiting for a ride to the airport to catch their flight to their honeymoon, and who then refuse to get in the cab because they have had so much fun waiting around.

We can be so enamored with the comforts and joys of this present life that we find it hard to believe that heaven will be better than the most exquisite pleasures this world has to offer. This is a particular danger for Christians in the Western world given the wealth that even the poorest among us enjoys. Material prosperity and riches, of course, are not sinful in themselves. God often blesses His servants with wealth. However, wealth can distract us from looking forward to our heavenly home if we are not careful. To help us remember the joys of heaven, we need look no further than to the Apostle Paul, who had no inordinate attachment to this present life.

In today's passage, we see that the Apostle knew and looked forward to the blessed hope of heaven. There is a tension in Paul's mind evident in this text. Although he enjoyed his fellowship with the Philippian Christians and saw the necessity of remaining on earth to teach them more, his true desire was to see Jesus. Paul understood that heaven is far better than the best this world has to offer ([Phil. 1:23-24](#)). He makes it clear that death is not finally a tragedy for believers. In fact, to die is to be in the presence of our wonderful Savior (v. 21).

Here we have a contrast between the good and the better. Our lives on earth are not entirely fraught with peril, for "to live is Christ." But heaven is "far better." It is better to see Jesus face-to-face than to see Him by faith on this side of heaven.



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST