

LoveJoy United
Presbyterian Church

THE OBSERVER



Dear friends,

Why do we worship? That's a question that I've been thinking about these days. When the bad news of the world is overwhelming, when our calendars are full, when we have so many other options on a Sunday, why do we come together to worship? It can't be because it's all that entertaining. Netflix will always win that battle. Worship doesn't offer a quick fix to the world's problems – or even to our own. It doesn't always feel relevant. It moves at a slower pace than we're used to on TV or on our screens. One might even begin to wonder whether we really even need worship– or if only God does.

But as I reflect on these questions, I've come to believe that worship isn't something God needs from us at all, but something we need from God. When we gather in worship, especially in these confusing and chaotic times, we enter again into God's rhythm. We remember who we are and whose we are. We're rooted once more in the stories of God's love and justice. We gather, sing, pray, sit in silence, and break bread – not because its entertaining, or because it's the most efficient way to fix anything. We worship because in these simple, ancient practices, God shapes us into disciples of Jesus. This is no quick, fast-food approach to Christianity. Like a river carving out a canyon, or a vine slowly pressing through the cracks in concrete, God shapes us– slowly and deeply – together into Christ's own body: people of faith, hope, and love.

Through the month of August, we'll be exploring, during worship, how our worship not only honors God, but also forms us into the kind of community the world needs. In a world that tries to shape us in countless ways– toward power, violence, money–worship is an act of resistance. In worship, we open ourselves most fully to be shaped by God as lovers of justice, grace, mercy, and peace.

In Christ,
Pastor Daniel



IS IT STILL WORTH THE RISK?

Musings by Richard Sisk

I meant to have this viewpoint in the July "Observer", but it was too long and I didn't get it trimmed down before the deadline. Sorry! Please read again the "Parable of the Talents". *"This has typically been interpreted by our Western 21st Century Cultured Church as being about proper investment. Jesus' disciples are urged to use their abilities and gifts to serve God—without reservation and without fear of taking risks."* To get a "slightly" different point read these excerpts of an analysis by Richard L. Rohrbaugh [Professor Emeritus specializing in using anthropological studies of Mediterranean culture to set the New Testament in its ancient social and cultural context.]

"Why does this matter to American readers of the Bible? Because...it is written by, for and about people from the Mediterranean world who did not think, live or communicate like Westerners and who would be astonished at many of the things modern, Western readers 'find' within its pages. Moreover, few of us are aware of the subtle ways in which we unconsciously import our American culture into the world and language of the Biblical text."

"In Matthew 25:14–30 Jesus tells a story about a rich man going on a journey who entrusted large sums of money to three slave-managers.

"We imagine the master in the story to be an analogue for God and thus see the story as divine affirmation of our Western economic practices of trading and investment. The problem, however, is that given the 'limited good' outlook of ancient Mediterranean cultures, seeking 'more' was considered morally wrong. Because the pie was 'limited' and already all distributed, anyone getting 'more' meant someone else got less. Thus honorable people did not try to get more, and those who did were automatically considered thieves: To have gained, to have accumulated more than one started with, is to have taken the share of someone else. As the early Christian theologian Jerome would later write: 'Every rich person is either a thief or the heir of a thief.'"

*"Of course the elite tried to deflect accusations of getting rich at the expense of others by having their affairs handled by slaves—exactly what is described in the story Jesus tells. Shameful, or even greedy, behavior could be condoned in slaves because slaves had no honor nor any expectation of it. As Sirach so wisely says, it amounts to this: 'A rich man will exploit you if you can be of use to him, but if you are in need, he will forsake you' (13:4). And exploitation is exactly what this ancient story is about. The returning master admits to what the third slave knew ahead of time: that he is a 'hard' (the Greek term here, skleros, is used by ancient writers to describe someone who is cruel, merciless or arrogantly inhumane) man who 'reaps where he did not sow and gathers where he did not scatter seed' (Matthew 25:24). The perfect definition of a thief! How have we missed that?" **[Maybe this isn't so different as to how we view the rich today?]** (My comment, not R.L. Rohrbaugh.)*

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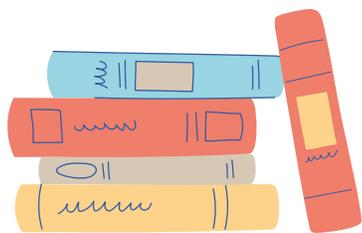
"And what about the third slave, the one so bitterly rebuked by the returning master and vilified in virtually all Western interpretation for failing to invest the money? In Matthew, he buries the deposit for safekeeping. The rabbis argued that this was precisely the right thing to do so the deposit could be returned intact (b. Baba Mezi'a 42b; m. Baba Batra 4:8.) In fact they ruled that burying the deposit meant the trustee was not liable if a loss occurred. He does not participate in the scheme to double the master's money, but honorably refrains from taking anything that belongs to the share of another." "The third slave is told he should have invested the money with bankers so the master could have at least earned interest on his money. But seeking interest from another Israelite was forbidden by the Torah (Deuteronomy 23:19-20)."

"What causes cross-cultural miscommunication is the unwarranted assumption that people from other cultures think like we do. But they don't. So when we read this story (and so many others in the Bible) through Western eyes, we miss completely what it once said to people in the ancient Mediterranean world. Perhaps it might have been possible for Western readers to see this master's rapacious behavior for what it really is had we not been so eager to discover our own cultural values affirmed in the sacred text."

This interpretation really changes the paradigm narrative of the Talents Parable. The master is a harsh, heartless thief and his cronies are just as wicked. The third servant is the only honorable person in the story. And this creates a huge problem for me for this is "as the kingdom of heaven" (verse 14)! What kind of heaven is this where the only honorable person is assigned to a place with weeping and gnashing of teeth and the despicable are richly rewarded? This sends chills down my spine! Can this really be a snapshot of heaven????

May God's Peace Envelop You,
Richard Sisk

ANNOUNCEMENTS



2025 LoveJoy Lyceum Book List

- 8/20/25 The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben and/or Overstory by Richard Powers
- 9/17/25 Blood Sisters by Vanessa Lillie
- 10/15/25 Absolution by Alice McDermott
- 11/19/25 Peace Like a River by Leif Enger
- 12/17/25 Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Sunday Morning Live Is an informal, conversational class that seeks to connect scripture, theology, and faith to our lives and world. Each Sunday at 9:00, they meet in the Love Room and on Zoom. They relate current events to Scripture to create thought-provoking discussions via The Wired Word.
- Summer Adult Class on the Gospel of Mark Pastor Daniel will begin leading a class on the Gospel of Mark on June 1 at 9 AM in the Fellowship Hall. Using curriculum by Amy-Jill Levine, we'll be exploring what scholars believe was the first Gospel to be written. Please sign up so we can order materials for you. Sign up on the table in the Narthex or at lovejoyupc.org/nextsteps.
- Lectionary Bible Study meets at 10:15 a.m. on Wednesdays. Join pastor Daniel either in-person or on Zoom for a discussion of the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday's worship service.

LYCEUM LINKS FOR AUGUST

Lyceum Book Club will meet via Zoom at 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, August 20. The book for this month is *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben and/or *Overstory* by Richard Powers

A Place of Grace Boomwhacker Choir Retreat: August 19th 4:30 - 6 PM

A Place of Grace has started monthly BOOMWHACKER CHOIR Retreats at Maeva's Coffee, 1320 Milton Road, Alton, IL, in the small banquet room! Do you enjoy making music? Are you interested in learning more about worship hymns and leaning into the music of faith as you work with others to play it? Join our Boomwhacker Choir! No previous musical experience is necessary. Please RSVP by Friday, August 15th.



A Place of Grace Mission Madness Workshop Retreat:

August 20th 6-8 PM

Help us help others! If you are looking for a place to plug in with local mission agencies, but are not available during their weekday hours or need sit down jobs, Mission Madness Workshop Retreats are perfect! Crafters will work together to create gifts for RFM, Community Hope Center, and Hoyleton Youth & Family Services during a time of purposeful fellowship. Join us!





BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

Every child begins their school year
with a blessing

Sunday August 10 at

10:15 am

2550 Rock Hill Road Wood

River, IL

lovejoyupc.org



Family
POOL PARTY

10 | AUGUST
SUNDAY 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

RIVER-AIRE SWIM CLUB
5316 DIXON DRIVE
GODFREY, IL 62035

lovejoyupc.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

August Birthday's

1	17
Don Clapsaddle	Sandy Blackford
Hannah Klette	19
Joel Freeman	Colten Daily
2	Diana Thompson
Kiara Alexis Chapman	Kori Frankford
Mason Ballard	20
Derek Lankford	Anthony Carmack
3	Erica Griggs
Marilyn King	21
4	Shane Lindquist Jr.
Eva Huff	22
5	Cheryl Panyik Russ
Chrissy Bristow	Thompson 23
6	Robert Musgrave-
Crystal Shelton	Perkins
7	25
Sharon Jenkins	Jackson Russell
9	Garrett Jensen
Delores Bloemker	26
Jeffrey Frankford	Payton Todd Betty
Mag Paddock	Langenwalter Kate
11	Workman
Mary Cordes	29
13	Sandy Monroe
Mary Barnes	30
14	Brenda Gremlı
Carol Foraker	Jaynie Doerr
Larry Stroheck	
15	
Gary Zakrzewski	

June 2025 Financial Notes:

Checking Account Balance as 5/30/2025 \$70,927.98
Savings Account Balance as of 5/30/2025 \$19,323.35
Ending Balance as of 5/30/2025 \$90,251.33
Pledge Income Received:
YTD Pledge total \$86,955.93
Mission Market Fund: The current amount in the fund
\$126,840.40. The interest rate is holding at 2.11 %

For questions, please contact Sarah Carnes or
Tom Wyatt.



Food Pantry Needs:

Canned Vegetables
Your donations allow us to help
others and are always appreciated.



DONATING BLOOD ONLY TAKES ABOUT AN HOUR.

Can you spare one?



American
Red Cross

Blood Drive
**Love Joy United Presbyterian
Church**

Fellowship Hall
2550 Rock Hill Rd
Wood River, IL 62095

Thursday, August 14, 2025
1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Please visit RedCrossBlood.org and enter: LOVEJOY to schedule an appointment.

Give Aug 1 to 28 for \$15 e gift card & successful
donations get A1C testing. Terms: rcblood.org/Test



Scan to schedule
an appointment.

1-800-RED CROSS | 1-800-733-2767 | RedCrossBlood.org | Download the Blood Donor App

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Poem

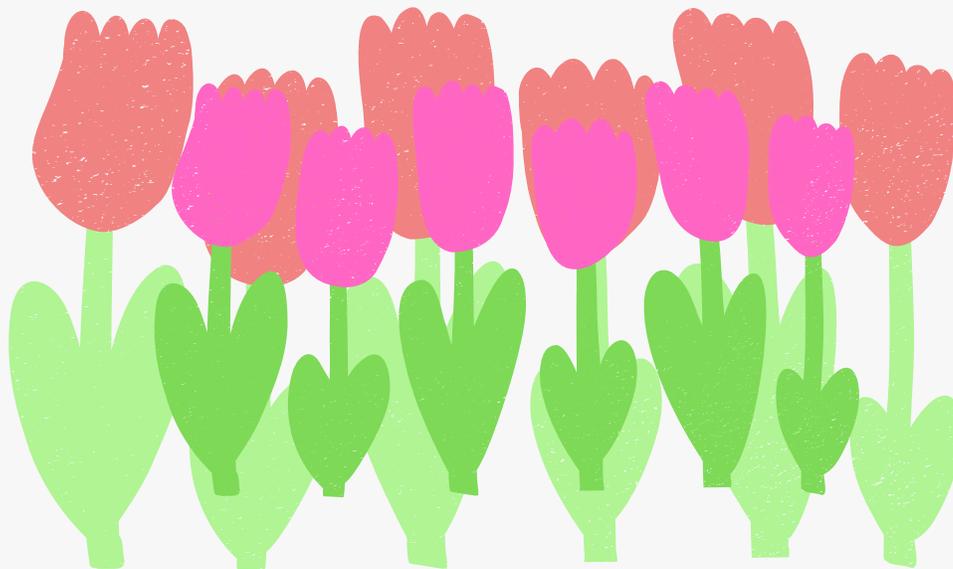
The Journey We Must Take

*All things have a start, a
beginning.
We have a Journey.
To start, we shall take that first
step.
It Will not be easy, it will be
hard.
For some, it will be a walk in the
grass.
For others, it will be a difficult
mountain climb.
We must go where the road
leads us.
Christ walked down the road of
The Father.
The road was challenging.
So, lets take that first step on
the journey we must take.*

What the Holy Spirit Says

*This is the Fruit of the spirit.
The love and Joy for both is
Happiness.
Let there be peace in this world
and throughout the land.
One must have patience, for it
reaps rewards.
Kindness is a good and
beautiful thing.
Generosity is a great and huge
thing.
Faithfulness is what God the
Father wants.
Gentleness is the cousin of love.
For the father of patience is self
control.
For these are the fruits that
come from God's trees.*

Poet Laureate
Herbert J. Peel



August

2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Fellowship Committee Meeting 9am -Adult Formation: Bible Class 9am -Adult Formation: Sunday 10:15am -Worship 11:30am - Fellowship Committee	4 10am - Mat Weaving Group Fellowship Hall Floor Maintenance	5 11am - Staff Meeting Fellowship Hall Floor Maintenance	6 10:15am -Lectionary Bible Study 11 :30am -Lunch Bunch 7pm - Evening Prayer Fellowship Hall Floor Maintenance	7	8	9
10 Blessing of the Backpacks 9am -Adult Formation: Bible 9am -Adult Formation: Sunday 10:15am -Worship All-Church Pool Party	11 9am - Food Pantry 10am - Mat Weaving Group 12:15pm - PEO Women's Group	12 11am - Staff Meeting	13 10:15am -Lectionary Bible Study 11 :30am -Lunch Bunch 5pm - A Place of Grace Mission Madness 7pm - Evening Prayer	14 Presbytery Gathering 1pm - Red Cross Blood Drive 6pm - Stewardship Committee Meeting	15 2pm- ACE Committee Meeting 2pm - PEO Set up for Luncheon	16 9am - PEO Luncheon
17 9am -Adult Formation: Bible Class 9am -Adult Formation: Sunday 10:15am -Worship 11:30 am - Fellowship Hour	18 10am - Mat Weaving Group	19 11am - Staff Meeting 6pm - Finance Meeting	20 10:15am -Lectionary Bible Study 11 :30am -Lunch Bunch 7pm - Evening Prayer 5pm - Mission Madness 7:15pm - LoveJoy Lyceum Book Club	21	22	23
24 9am -Adult Formation: Bible Class 9am -Adult Formation: Sunday 10:15am -Worship	25 9am - Food Pantry 10am - Mat Weaving Group	26 11am - Staff Meeting	27 10am - Lexie Suerig Memorial 10:15am -Lectionary Bible Study 11 :30am -Lunch Bunch 1 pm - Sewing and Craft Circle 7pm - Evening Prayer	28 6:30pm - Session Meeting	29	30
31 9am -Adult Formation: Bible Class 9am -Adult Formation: Sunday 10:15am -Worship						



LoveJoy United
Presbyterian Church
A WELCOMING, NURTURING,
PRAYING COMMUNITY OF FAITH

2550 Rock Hill Road
Wood River, IL
62095
Phone: 618-254-5880
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

