
SERVICE NOTES

UMH: *United Methodist Hymnal*, TFWS: *The Faith We Sing*, Girdwood Chapel's
CCLI Basic #: 11038417, CCLI Streaming License #: CSPL155734, NRSVue: *New
Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

The Worship Helpers—Greeter: Loretta, Tech Helper: Betsy, Liturgist: Terry,
Preacher: Pastor Hyunghee

Announcements:

- **Girdwood Food Pantry:** First Sundays 2-4p.m., 2nd&4th Wednesday 4-6p.m.
- **2026 Summer Message Series “*Mission and Evangelism in Our Context*”:** Throughout July and August, we will explore what mission and evangelism mean in the unique context of Girdwood. Using the Revised Common Lectionary, along with selected biblical passages and insights from mission and evangelism scholars and practitioners, we will reflect on how God calls us to live, serve, and share the good news in our community today.
- **Free Piano Concert on Sep. 11**, Friday, 6:00p.m. in the Chapel.
- **Finance Report on Sep. 13**, Sunday at 9:30a.m.
- **Nominations Committee Meeting on Sep.15** at 2:30p.m. via Zoom
- **Leadership Meeting on Sep.15** at 7:00p.m. via Zoom
- **Finance Team meeting on Sep.22** at 3:00p.m. in the Chapel
- **75th Church Anniversary Celebration on Sep.27** (Sun.) in the Chapel



August 23, 2026 | Sunday Worship | 9:30 a.m.

** Indicates an invitation to rise in body or spirit.*

Welcome & Announcements (*back of bulletin*)

*Call to Worship

One: God is still gathering a people.

All: God's house is a house of prayer for all peoples.

One: There is room for those already here,

All: God's gathering is not finished.

One: So let us open our hearts, make room for one another, and worship the God whose love reaches beyond what we can see.

All: Let us worship God. Amen.

Opening Hymn

“It is Well with My Soul”

by Chris Tomlin

lyrics on the screen

Opening Prayer (*Unison*)

**Gracious God, you gather your people from places we know
and from places beyond our imagination.**

Open our hearts to your presence today.

Free us from the boundaries we create,

Teach us to receive one another with grace,

**and shape us into a community with room for those you are still
gathering. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.**

Scripture Reading Isaiah 56:1, 6–8 (NRSVue)

1 Thus says the Lord: Maintain justice, and do what is right, for soon my salvation will come and my deliverance be revealed.

6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

8 Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel: I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

One: This is the Word of God. **All: Thanks be to God.**

Message “Besides Those Already Gathered”

Holy Communion: *All are welcome at this open table.*

Invitation to the Table; The Great Thanksgiving; Epiclesis; Breaking the Bread; Sharing the Bread and the Cup

Invitation to Generosity: Offering baskets are available on the side/back of the sanctuary. Or Mail your check: PO Box 1068, Girdwood, AK 99587, or give online; *scan QR code*→



Offertory Prayer (*Unison*)

Please join me in offertory prayer: Dear God, you have welcomed us and made room for us. Receive these gifts and use them to make your love known, to serve our neighbors, and to make room for those still to come. Amen.

Prayers and Celebration & The Lord's prayer

Concerns: “God in Your mercy” | **Response: “Hear our prayer”**

Joys: “Thanks be to God” | **Response: “Alleluia”**

*Closing Hymn “The Church of Christ, in Every Age” UMH #589
(Verses 1, 4, & 5) *lyrics on the screen*

*Benediction

*Sending Forth Song “On Eagles Wings” (CCLI Song #3127)

It is the tradition of the Girdwood Chapel UMC to form a circle, hold hands, and sing ‘On Eagles Wings.’

Our Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m. year-round

Sunday Column August 23

– HOW DO YOU LEARN TO BELIEVE?

Let me ask you something before I tell you about last Sunday. How do you learn? Not what you have learned — how. When someone hands you something true, an idea, a passage of scripture, a story about another person's life, what actually has to happen before it becomes something you know, rather than something you were merely told?

For some of us, understanding arrives through the written word. We need to hold it, read it slowly, sit with it in silence, let it settle before we know what we think. Give us a printed page and a quiet half hour, and something in us opens. For others of us, understanding works the opposite way. We need to talk before we know what we believe. We need a question asked out loud, a chance to push back, a real conversation moving in real time, before anything like understanding arrives at all. There are surely other patterns besides these two — I do not think this is a complete map of how human beings come to know something — but these two show up often enough in this congregation that I think they are worth naming plainly.

I ask because last Sunday gave me an unexpected, very concrete answer to this question, in the form of two quite different reactions to the same room.

Last Sunday we gathered for Brunch Church, which we hold quarterly, to explore hospitality through the actual, sometimes uneven experience of being hosted and being a host. We opened with communion at an open table, all are welcome, and before we passed the bread I said something I want to sit with a little longer here in writing: that we are guests before we are hosts.

I did not mean that only about Brunch Church. I meant it about everything. Before any of us ever set a table for someone else —

before we ever welcomed a stranger, fed a neighbor, or opened our doors to someone who needed them opened — we were first welcomed ourselves, at a table we did not build, by a host who did not wait for us to earn a seat. Whatever hospitality we practice, we practice second. We are guests before we are hosts. I think that order matters more than we usually notice.

Here is where the morning actually answered the question I opened with. For some of you, Brunch Church is exactly what you have been hoping for — real conversation, real connection, the chance to actually hear how someone's week has gone rather than trading pleasantries on the way out the door. You are the ones who learn by talking. For others of you, I know it was, frankly, too much. The format itself can feel like pressure — the sense that you might be expected to say something, out loud, in front of people, whether or not you have anything you want to say yet. You are the ones who need the page, the quiet, the chance to arrive at understanding on your own terms before anyone asks you to speak it aloud.

I do not think either reaction is the wrong one. I think they are both telling us something true about how differently God has made us, and how differently each of us actually comes to believe anything at all.

Here is why that matters for us specifically. A traditional worship service, especially on one of these long, bright Girdwood summer mornings when half the congregation would rather be on the water or the trail by ten o'clock, does not always give every one of you much to hold on to. For some of you, sitting in a pew in late-August daylight, half your mind already outside, worship can feel thin — present, but not quite reaching you.

And then you leave, and you go have lunch. Maybe with your family. Maybe with friends you have not properly caught up with in weeks. Maybe with someone you ran into by accident at a

restaurant or a brewery, and ended up talking with for an hour longer than either of you planned. And somewhere in that ordinary, unplanned meal — nothing about it organized by the church, nothing about it labeled worship — something opens that the pew did not open. Talking. Listening. Laughing longer than you meant to. Some of you are genuinely surprised, afterward, to realize you just encountered God there — not because the setting was more spiritual, but because it happened to be, for you, the door that was unlocked that particular afternoon.

This is why I am glad — genuinely, not just diplomatically — that Girdwood Chapel does not offer only one door. We have Brunch Church, which we hold quarterly. We have our traditional worship service, week after week, with its own real gifts: the language many of us grew up on, the hymns that carry decades of memory in them, a shape that does not ask you to perform anything at all. We have a Women's Bible study and a Men's group, each with their own rhythm of trust built slowly over time. We have this Sunday column, for those of you who, like me, sometimes need the written page to actually think something through. We have the weekly message and weekly communion, offered every single Sunday whether the room is full or not. None of these is the real church with the others as supplements. They are simply different doors into the same house.

There is another kind of door we sometimes forget to name, because it does not look like a program at all. Our building, and even something as ordinary as our parking lot, has slowly become something the wider community actually uses — not only our own members, but neighbors who need a place to leave a car for a hike or a shuttle into town, visitors coming into Girdwood from outside who need somewhere to park for an afternoon, groups who need a room for a gathering that has nothing to do with worship at all. None of that requires anyone to believe anything, or even to know who we are. It is simply space, offered plainly,

because we happen to have some, and Girdwood, especially in the summer, often does not. I think that quiet, mostly invisible kind of hospitality matters as much as anything we do on a Sunday morning.

A few days ago, someone in our own Girdwood community posted online, looking to start a new kind of group. Alcohol-free activities — movie nights, dinners, kickball, hikes, ceramics, game nights, whatever sounded fun. Not a recovery program, the post was careful to say. You do not need to be sober yourself to join. Just people looking for ordinary ways to connect, make friends, and have a good time together without alcohol being part of the equation.

Within just a couple of days, the post had drawn well over a hundred likes and dozens of comments — a striking response for a town our size.

I want to be honest about what I felt reading it, because I think the honesty matters more than a tidy conclusion would. Mostly what I felt was admiration. Whoever wrote that post noticed a real need in this town and simply moved to meet it. That kind of attentiveness — really seeing what is missing, and responding to it simply and directly — is something I hope keeps growing in all of us, myself included. I do not think it is a coincidence that this showed up in Girdwood specifically. I would like to think the Spirit had something to do with it.

It also named something true and worth saying plainly. Not so long ago, most people in most American towns could reasonably assume that the people around them were Christian, or at least loosely connected to a church, even if only a few times a year. We do not live inside that assumption anymore — not here, and not in most places. Scholars have a name for the shift: we have moved from an era called Christendom, when the church could count on

that shared assumption, into what is often called post-Christendom, when it no longer can.

I do not say that with any sadness. If anything, it leaves me hopeful. That post is proof that the hunger for real connection, for belonging, for a place where you do not have to perform anything to have a seat, is alive and well in Girdwood. It just no longer points toward us automatically. Our task is not to mourn the old assumption. It is to keep building doors real enough that people might actually want to walk through one — the way, it turns out, well over a hundred of our neighbors were already hoping someone would build.

Which is exactly why I think Brunch Church, our parking lot, our building use, and the whole range of doors we are trying to keep open, matter as much as they do. Nobody in Girdwood has to walk through any door we offer. If we only build one kind of door — and if that door only ever looks like Sunday morning worship — we are not simplifying anything. We are simply deciding, without quite meaning to, who never even considers trying us at all.

I want to introduce a book here: Jeffrey Conklin-Miller's *Leaning Both Ways at Once*. Faithful churches, it argues, have to lean two directions at once — rooted deeply in the practices that form us, and genuinely open to the people and forms that do not yet fit our habits. Lean only toward formation, and you get a congregation that is deep but closed, fluent in its own language and increasingly unintelligible to anyone outside it. Lean only toward openness, and you get a congregation with real energy but no floor underneath it — nothing sturdy enough to actually hold anyone through a hard season.

Our traditional worship, our weekly communion, our Bible studies — these are the rooted side. They ask something of us. They form us slowly, the way roots form slowly, mostly out of sight. Brunch Church, our open parking lot, our building shared freely with the

wider community — these are the other lean, open and low-barrier, built for people who need to talk their way into belief rather than read their way into it, or who may never join us for worship at all and simply need somewhere to park for a hike. We need both leans at once, in the same congregation, sometimes in the same person on different weeks of their life.

A good host, I am starting to think, does not serve only the dish they themselves love best. A good host offers a real range of dishes, trusting that different guests will reach for different things, and that this is not confusion — it is actually what hospitality looks like once you take your guests seriously as different people. We are guests before we are hosts. Maybe that is exactly why we are learning, slowly, to set more than one kind of table.

There is more to say before this series closes, and I want to save the harder question — how we might actually know whether any of this took root — for when we get there. For now, this is enough: notice how you, specifically, learn to believe something. And then notice which door here actually opens that kind of understanding for you.

— Pastor Hyunghee Kim

A NOTE ON CHRISTENDOM AND POST-CHRISTENDOM

Christendom refers to the long period in Western history (4c~20c) during which Christianity occupied the cultural center of European and North American public life. In this era, church membership was socially expected, Christian assumptions shaped public institutions and laws, and the church held significant cultural authority. Post-Christendom describes the current situation in much of North America and Western Europe, where those assumptions no longer hold. Church attendance is no longer expected. Christian language is no longer the assumed background of public life. The church now operates from the margins rather than the center — a position that is, historically, closer to that of the early church and arguably better suited to authentic witness. These terms are widely used in contemporary missiology (the theological study of the church's mission) and are developed at length in scholars such as Stuart Murray, Brian McLaren, and Jeffrey A. Conklin-Miller.