

**First Congregational United Church of Christ
February 26, 2023**



Painting by Jesus Mafa

First Sunday in Lent

Ministers: All who are a part of this church

Pastor: Rev. Enno K. Limvere

Musician: Naomi Tracy-Hegg

Choir Director: Ann Russ

Peace Candle Lighter: Nancy Starr

Liturgist: Linda Noble

Gathering Music

Words of Welcome

Prelude

Words to Enter Worship (Based on Psalm 33)

***People who gave up chocolate:* Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, Praise befits the upright, Praise the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings.**

***People who ate fish on Friday:* Sing to God a new song; play skillfully on the piano and organ, with shouts of praise. God loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.**

***People who gave up cartoons:* The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of God's heart to all generations.**

***People who are reading the daily devotional:* Happy is the people whose God is the LORD, the people whom God loves. Our soul waits for the LORD; God is our help and shield. Our heart is glad, because we trust God's holy love. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.**

Opening Hymn #20 God of Abraham and Sarah

1. God of Abraham and Sarah, God of Moses, Miriam's Guide
God of David and prophets, God in Jesus Glorified;
Up from the dust you raise a people, breath in the breath of life, of soul;
Down through the years the people praise you till alleluias make the whole!
2. God who dances in creation, spinning stars above our heads;
God who face inscribe in music by whose hand the earth is fed.
Up from the ground you raise the mountains, raise our spirits, lift our eyes;
Down through the years the people praise you till alleluias flood the skies!
3. God who loves the poor in spirit, God who comforts those who mourn;
Balm for wounds, the friend of sinners, taking the side of earth's forlorn;
Up from the depths you raise your people, giving them courage for the day;
Down through the years the people praise you till alleluias light their way!
4. In our lives from birth to dying, depth of sorrow, height of joy;
Praising God in every season, let every key our hearts employ,
Praise is the healing, praise the glory, praise is the final mystery;
Down through the years the people praise you till alleluias set them free!

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Contributors: James Gertmenian

Words of Lament

God, in whom we find rest, we are a nation and a culture that prizes busyness and achievement. Our youth are busy morning, afternoon, and evenings and stay up late for homework. Our families don't have time to eat together because their schedules are so messed up. Adults have lots of activities and distractions

to keep us from sitting still. All of us, no matter how young or old, are glued to our smart phones, tablets, and televisions. Help us, Merciful God, help us to breathe, to look around, to slow down, and be present with you, each other, and the world around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Time of Silence

Words for Blessing the Earth (words from National Council of Churches)

Single voice: We are thankful for the passion of the children and youth among us who push us to recognize the urgency of the environmental crisis.

All: Thank you, creator and giver of passion.

Single voice: We are thankful for the wisdom of the aged among us who remind us of what it means to respect the earth and to live in community with one another.

All: Thank you, creator and giver of wisdom.

Single voice: We are thankful for the insights of the native brothers and sisters among us who draw on their tradition and teach us about the sacredness of all creation and how to live in kinship with it.

All: Thank you, creator and giver of insight.

Single voice: We are thankful for the inspiration of those among us who have already begun to live their lives in ways that show a caring for the earth, water, and the skies.

All: Thank you, creator and giver of inspiration.

All: We thank you, God, for all signs of hope that keep us from despairing and point us toward new ways of living.

Words of Poetry & Lighting the Candle of Peace

It is a custom in our congregation to light our Peace Candle during worship, as a witness to the Prince of Peace and our communal intention to be peace-makers as a Just Peace Church.

What do you hear in wilderness? By TS Ray

Creek turning into a mighty waterfall,
pebbles taking on rocks in a brawl,
shaping up into a story,
of the mighty underdog.

I had a dialogue with myself,
waiting for my alter ego to find thyself,
no words were said or heard,
search was never-ending and blurred.

Just then it occurred to me,
do words drown out our thoughts,
do thoughts drown out our vision,
does vision gets blurred in the sound?

Be as the pebble,
flow out of the rubble,
make peace with stillness,
for in silence we learn to be one with our own greatness.

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #211 Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days

- 1 Lord, who through forty days,
For us did fast and pray,
Teach us with you to mourn our sins,
And close by you to stay.
- 2 As you with Satan did contend,
And did the victory win,
O give us strength to persevere,
In you to conquer sin.
- 3 And through these days of penitence,
And through your Passion-tide,
Yes evermore, in life and death,
O Christ, with us abide.
- 4 Abide with us till when this life
Of suffering is past,
An Easter of unending joy
We may attain at last!

Scripture Readings

1st Scripture Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 (The Message)

3 The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal GOD had made. He spoke to the Woman: “Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?”

2-3 The Woman said to the serpent, “Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It’s only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘Don’t eat from it; don’t even touch it or you’ll die.’”

4-5 The serpent told the Woman, “You won’t die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you’ll see what’s really going on. You’ll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil.” **6** When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she’d know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate. **7** Immediately the two of them did “see what’s really going on”—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

2nd Scripture Matthew 4:1-11 (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition)

4 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' ⁴ But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' ⁷ Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; ⁹ and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Children's Message Dangerous?

Choir Anthem Climbing High Mountains

Message Making Room

Musical Reflections

Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Mother God, 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

News of God at Work in our Congregation & Community

Our Time of Giving

Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

Closing Hymn #451 Be Now My Vision

1. Be thou my vision, O God of my heart,
nothing surpasses the love you impart;

You my best thought in the day and the night,
waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

2. Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
ever within me, my soul is assured;
Mother and Father, you are both to me;
Now and Forever your child will be..
3. Riches I heed not, nor life's empty praise:
you, my inheritance now and always;
you and you only the first in my heart;
great God my treasure, may we never part.
4. Sovereign of heaven, my victories won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

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Benediction

Sending Music