

# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

March 5th, 2023

The Second Sunday in Lent

A Service of the Word and Holy Communion



**Lenten Cross with Purple Robe**

*Unique crayon and digital worship art*

*by Stushie*

*a Scottish Pastor, ministering in East Tennessee*

*Stushie Art - [Stushieart.com](http://Stushieart.com)*



# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

a just world for all

March 5th, 2023

Second Sunday in Lent

Service of the Word and Holy Communion

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.  
Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world  
but in order that the world might be saved through him."  
John 3:16-17 (NRSV)*

## WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

*\*please stand as you are able,*

### Welcome and Announcements

Prelude – *Keith Konet*

### \*Call to Worship

One: From the safety and comfort of home, God called Abram to go from all he knew to embrace a future yet to be revealed.

**All: "Go from," God says, and our hesitant hearts place one foot in front of the other to trust God with the unknown.**

One: By night, Nicodemus came seeking greater insight into the teachings of God for the journey set before him. Jesus called him out of the shadows and towards a life born anew.

**All: "Go towards" God says, and a new life awaits us. We reach towards a God who has not come to condemn the world but to offer a salve that can heal all wounds.**

One: We fear the unknown and that which we lack in understanding. "How can this be?" we proclaim with Nicodemus. And yet, God's call is one that urges us to go with our whole self into that unknowing, trusting that God will provide a way.

**All: Love calls us forth into lives of transformation, born anew into new paths of faith. Though we do not know where we are going, God has promised to never leave us alone. Let us worship the One who will show us the way**

**\*Invocation**

God of calls and courage,  
you draw us towards your loving embrace  
even as we face what seems like impossibility.  
We experience heartache and grief,  
injustice and cruelty, fear and anxiety  
as daily teachers on this path of faith.  
As you call us to go into  
an uncertain and unknown future,  
O God, grant us the courage needed  
to let go of all that we have known  
so that we can take hold of the new life  
you are bringing about even now.  
Though we may not know where we are going, God,  
your way is revealed moment by moment,  
step by step, and breath by breath.  
In the name of the One  
who so loves the world we pray.  
Amen.

**\*Hymn - NCH 24 - Yigdal Elohim Chai (The God of Abraham Praise) vv. 1, 2, & 4**

**Yigdal Elohim Chai (The God of Abraham Praise)**

Versifier (attributed to): Daniel ben Judah c. 1400

Translator: Max Landsberg, 1884; alt.

Translator: Newton Mann, 1884; alt.

Author: Moses Maimonides, 12th century

Tune: LEONI 6.6.8.4.D.

Adapter: Meyer Lyon, 1770

Source: Traditional Yigdal melody

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**Hebrew:**

Yigdal elohim chai v'yishtabach,  
nimtza v'ein eit el m'tziuto  
Echad v'ein yachid k'yichudo,  
nelam v'gai ein sof l'achduto.

1 The God of Abraham praise,  
all praises to God's name,  
who was and is and is to be,  
fore'er the same!  
The one eternal God,  
before what now appears;  
the First, the Last:  
beyond all thought  
through timeless years!

2 God's spirit freely flows,  
high surging where it will;  
God spoke of old in prophet's word;  
that word speaks still.  
Established is God's law,  
and changeless it shall stand  
deep written on the human heart,  
in every land.

4 The God of Sarah praise,  
all praises to God's name,  
who was and is and is to be,  
fore'er the same!  
The one eternal God,  
before what now appears;  
the First, the Last: beyond all thought  
through timeless years!

## **LENTEN CANDLE LITURGY**

### **Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **Meditation**

*(Silent time)*

One: As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of injury done  
to the earth and its ecosystem.

*(A candle is extinguished)*

#### **Lenten Candle Prayer**

One: Let us pray

Many: Living God, as we journey through the holy season of Lent, may we be open to your  
presence. Give us the strength to make the changes that are needed in our lives. Amen.

#### **Hymn - NCH 207 - Just As I Am**

##### **Just As I Am**

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1836; alt.

Tune: WOODWORTH L.M.

Composer: William B. Bradbury, 1849

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2 Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fighting's and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Genesis 12:1-6

*We begin this second Sunday in Lent with the call of Abram in Genesis 12. God spoke to our ancestor and told him to go away from his family and homeland to a new place that God would show him and Sarai. God would bless Abram and Sarai and from them would come a great nation. God would make them and their descendants a blessing to others, making their name great and known, for through them all people of the earth would be blessed. Abram listened to God, and Abram and Sarai, along with Abram's nephew Lot, followed God's instructions and left their home.*

**12** 1 YHWH said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people, and the home of your parents, and go to a place I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great people. I will bless you and make your name so great that it will be used in blessings. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you. And all the people on the face of the earth will be blessed through you."

4 Abram, who was 75 years old when he left Haran, began the journey as YHWH had instructed, and his nephew Lot went with them.

5 Abram took Sarai his spouse, Lot, all their possessions, and all the dependents they acquired in Haran, and set out for Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, 6 Abram and his family traveled through the land until they arrived at the sacred place at Shechem and came to the oak grove of Moreh. The Canaanites occupied the land at that time.

### Psalm Response: Psalm 121 *(Responsively)*

*The psalmist sings of assurance of God's help in Psalm 121. The hills, the mountains, the high places that were known to be where heaven and earth met in the ancient world—they are not the source of the psalmist's hope, but the Creator who made heaven and earth. The psalmist sings a blessing: God is the one who keeps the people and protects them from evil. God guards their entrances and their exits, and is with each person at their rising and their lying down, always.*

1 I lift my eyes to the mountains—  
from where will my help come?

**2 My help comes from God,  
who made heaven and earth!**

3 God won't let our footsteps slip:  
our Guardian never sleeps.

**4 the Guardian of Israel  
will never slumber, never sleep!**

5 God is our Guardian;  
God is our shade:  
with God by our side,

**6 The sun cannot overpower us by day,  
nor the moon at night.**

7 God guards us from harm,  
guards our lives.

**8 God guards our leaving  
and our coming back,  
now and forever.**

**Second Reading: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17**

*The Epistle reading continues in the letter to the Romans but backs up a chapter from last week to verses in Romans 4. Paired with the Genesis reading, the apostle Paul interprets Abraham and Sarah's trust and obedience in God as righteousness. It is not the works that Abraham and Sarah did, but their faith that made them righteous before God. This applies to all people, regardless of those who follow the Law or not, as part of Paul's introduction of his theology of inclusion of Gentiles with the Jewish followers of Jesus in Rome. This section concludes with Paul's use of the blessing of Abraham and Sarah into a great nation ("the parents of many nations") as an indication of God's promise of resurrection, a promise of calling things into existence that do not yet exist. A promise that what seems impossible is possible with God.*

**4** 1 What will we say about Sarah and Abraham, our ancestors according to the flesh?  
2 Certainly if they were justified by their deeds they had grounds for boasting—but not in God's view.  
3 For what does scripture say? "Sarah and Abraham believed God, and it was credited to them as righteousness."

4 Now, when a person works, the wages are regarded not as a favor, but as what is due.  
5 But when people do nothing except believe in the One who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

13 The promise made to Sarah and Abraham and their descendants—that they would inherit the world—did not depend on the Law; it was made in view of the righteousness that comes from faith. 14 For if those who live by the Law are heirs, then faith is pointless and the promise is worthless. 15 The Law forever holds the potential for punishment. Only when there is no Law can there be no violation.

16 Hence everything depends on faith; everything is grace. Thus the promise holds true for all of Sarah's and Abraham's descendants, not only for those who have the Law, but for all who have their faith. They are the mother and the father of us all, 17 which is why scripture says, "I will make you the parents of many nations"—all of which is done in the sight of the God in whom they believed, the God who restores the dead to life and calls into being things that don't exist.

**Gospel Reading: John 3:1-17**

*John 3:1-17 contains the famous visit of Nicodemus, a Pharisee, to Jesus, who knew that Jesus was sent by God but had questions (and seems to indicate there may be other Pharisees who believe and question). Jesus told Nicodemus that no one could see the kin-dom of God without being born from above. Nicodemus took this literally and asked how someone could crawl back into their mother's womb to be born anew. Jesus explained that one must be born of the Spirit. Nicodemus still does not understand, and Jesus explains that if he cannot understand earthly things, he cannot understand heavenly things. Jesus then uses the story of the people in the wilderness in Numbers 21:4-9 who had*

*been quarreling among themselves and God sent poisonous snakes among them. However, when Moses prayed on behalf of the people, God told him to make a serpent and place it on a pole, and that everyone who was bitten would look up at it and would live. To Jesus, this story illustrated that when we look above the quarrels and everyday squabbles of the world and look up at God's ways, we are living into the Spirit, and that the Only Begotten will also be lifted up to save people from sin and death. Perhaps the poisonous snakes were the lies, bitterness, and jealousy of the people metaphorically biting each other, lost in their sinful ways. Jesus then teaches that God so loved the world that God sent the Only Begotten so that everyone who believes would not die but have everlasting life. In the use of the previous metaphor, Jesus' death and resurrection saves us from ourselves, our own sin, the way the serpent on Moses' pole saved the people of Israel from their own sinful ways. Verse 17, often omitted, includes that Jesus came not to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

**3** 1 A certain Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin (*assembly or tribunal of religious elders*),

2 came to Jesus at night. "Rabbi," he said, "we know you're a teacher come from God, for no one can perform the signs and wonders you do, unless by the power of God."

3 Jesus gave Nicodemus this answer:

"The truth of the matter is,  
unless one is born from above,  
one cannot see the kin-dom of God."

4 Nicodemus said, "How can an adult be born a second time?

I can't go back into my mother's womb to be born again!"

5 Jesus replied:

"The truth of the matter is,  
no one can enter God's realm  
without being born of water and the Spirit.

6 What is born of the flesh is flesh;  
what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

7 So don't be surprised when I tell you that  
you must be born from above.

8 The wind blows where it will.  
You hear the sound it makes,  
but you don't know where it comes from  
or where it goes.  
So it is with everyone  
who is born of the Spirit."

9 "How can this be possible?" asked Nicodemus.

10 Jesus replied, "You're a teacher of Israel, and you  
still don't understand these matters?

11 "The truth of the matter is,  
we're talking about what we know;



- we're testifying about what we've seen—  
yet you don't accept our testimony.
- 12 If you don't believe  
when I tell you about earthly things,  
how will you believe  
when I tell you about heavenly things?
- 13 No one has gone up to heaven  
except the One who came down from heaven—  
the Chosen One.
- 14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
so the Chosen One must be lifted up,
- 15 so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One  
might have eternal life.
- 16 Yes, God so loved the world  
as to give the Only Begotten One,  
that whoever believes may not die,  
but have eternal life.
- 17 God sent the Only Begotten into the world  
not to condemn the world,  
but that through the Only Begotten  
the world might be saved."

### **Choral Response – His Name is Wonderful**

*Music by Audrey Mieir, 1959*  
*Choir: Keith Konet, Bob Bucklew and Barbara Rossington*  
*A cappella*

### **Reflection – To Believe is to Be-Love - The Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

## **We Respond**

### **\*Prayer of Response**

God of the Wild Geese, we pray that you would gather us together, and help us to know the way to go. Like the geese know when to fly, may we know when it is time to move on, and when it is time to sit down.

May we know when it is time to rise up and make noise, and when it is time to be still in our heart.

May we know our need to gather together, and may we support one another. In this time of Lent, as we wait for the lengthening of the days, as we await the changing of the season, may we know you in the stillness of waiting for the earth to be born anew, as we live into your ways of love, justice, and mercy.

May the God of Wild Geese remind us that we are not alone on this journey of faith. Amen.



**\*Hymn of Response – 473 NCH - Blessed Assurance**

**Blessed Assurance**

Text: Fanny Crosby, 1873; alt.

Tune: ASSURANCE Irr.

Composer: Phoebe P. Knapp, 1873

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**1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood.**

**Refrain:**

**This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long;  
This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.**

**2 Perfect submission, perfect delight!  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;  
Angels descending, bring from above  
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. [Refrain]**

**3 Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Savior am happy and blessed;  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
filled with God's goodness, lost in Christ's love. [Refrain]**

**Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

Gracious and Giving God, you have called us to give of our resources so that others may experience the new life you are inviting us into. Let our gifts be for the birthing of new life in our local community, in the global community, and in our faith community. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.

**The Offertory – *Keith Konet***

**\*Presentation of Offerings - Doxology**

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

**\*Blessing of the Gifts**

**O God who calls us to go out into the world with generosity, may these gifts call us from our lives of comfort and towards a faith journey that embraces your love, justice, and compassion for a world in need of your healing. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.**

## Choral Hymn - NCH 211 – Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days

Text: Claudia F. I. Hernaman, 1873; alt.

Music: ST. FLAVIAN C.M..

Source: The Whole Booke of Psalms, 1562

Choir: Barbara Rossington, and Bob Bucklew

Accompanist: Keith Konet

### **\*Call to Reconciliation**

When we least expect it, even when we are not ready, God comes to us, calling us to trust, calling us to follow, calling us to set aside our foolish lives, for the grace-full ones which are offered to us. Let us confess how often we choose not to follow, as we pray together saying,

### **\*Prayer for Forgiveness**

We are all too human, Faithful God, and so think we have nothing to learn from others, and thus discount ancestors in the faith like Nicodemus or Sarah. We look for an answers online, convinced that we can trust whatever we find. We close tight the shutters of our souls, so the Spirit can only rattle us, but not get in to transform our lives.

Yet you continue to keep watch of us, Promise Giver, whether it is when we swagger through the sunshine of our lives, or in those shadowed moments of uncertainty in the night. You will not stumble as you continue to come to us, to lead us into your kin-dom. You will always be our help, whether or not we recognize it or accept it, even as you remained faithful to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

-- *Silence is kept*

### **\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: Our hope, our help, our peace, our joy  
all come from God,  
the One who loved us,  
and the world so much,  
that Jesus came to bring us salvation.

**Many: Keeper of our souls, be with us;  
Watcher of our days, lead us;  
Salvation of our lives, have mercy on us.  
Amen.**

## CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

MARCH 5, 2023

*(How precious this sacred but ordinary meal is in the lives of each congregation and of each individual. We are so grateful that, while many churches, such as Zion Church, have returned to Holy Communion in sanctuaries, most of us have members who are cautious or ill, recovering from surgery or medical procedures, or unwilling to drive in winter weather, whose Communion is as much*

*a part of our sacred meal as those who have come to the Chapel.*

*We pause to invite those at home who have not already prepared elements to do so.  
Even an English muffin or a slice of toast can become a sacrament, even a cup of water, tea, or coffee  
can become a remembrance of God's redeeming love).*

**Invitation to Communion   *(Reflecting on Psalm 121)***

One: We lift up our eyes to grandma's pantry and the food pantry,  
to sacristy and IV pole, grocery bag and take-out,  
looking for what sustains us.

**Many: God sustains us with the gifts of earth and sky,  
with parable words to guide our decisions,  
and human helpers to hold our sorrows.**

One: God does not sleep through our prayers  
or slumber when we weep or complain.  
God is our host, giving us a true meal,  
through the hungers of daytime work  
the wanderings of the night,  
and even when danger and loss surprises us.

**Many: We have bread and cup strength when we go out,  
bread and cup comfort when we come in,  
a sacrament of life as real as daily food,  
as holy as the small, sweet gift of Holy Communion.**

**Great Prayer of Thanksgiving/Eucharistic Prayer**

For the power of love in human life and history,  
we give thanks and praise.

Long ago our ancestors knew love's power  
and they became the tellers of love's tale.

Love bound them in covenant,  
teaching them to live in community  
with compassion and concern  
for the poorest among them.

Yet centuries of domination and violence  
shaped a different kind of community  
based on selfishness and inequality.

In the struggle against oppression,  
Jesus became the face of love,  
showing us the way to abundant life.

In word and deed, he announced  
love's new reign of justice, reconciliation, and peace.

Filled with the courage and passion of love's spirit,  
he gave his life to challenge the unjust systems of this world.

### **Words of Remembering**

This is a season of wilderness-

The season we grasp to understand the Divine just a little more.

This is the time for us to reach inwards to find the self that God sees.

This is the chance for us to gaze outwards, caring for the Christ in our midst.

The Lenten roads are long

Yet full of gifts.

The Lenten paths often seem chilly

Yet warm with the winds of the Spirit.

The Spirit of God is the light that leads us in the hushed nights.

The Christ is our companion on the journey in the intense sunlight of day.

We remember his time in the wilderness-

The struggles. The hunger. The peace.

And as we seek the Divine in our midst,

On this journey, we crave the bread of life.

On our desert roads, we thirst for the fruit of the vine, the cup of blessings.

### **Table Prayer – The Spirit Transforms**

**Many: May the Spirit who traveled with Christ in the wilderness  
and fills us with the hope of God  
surround these elements.**

**Many: May the Spirit speak to us in this season of wilderness  
becoming our strength on this journey  
and filling our lives with love. Amen.**

One: For this we pray in the words Jesus taught his Followers ...

### **The Lord's Prayer – using "debts" and "debtors"**

**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 debts,**

**as we forgive our debtors,**

**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

### **The Pouring and Breaking and Serving**

One: Through Jesus the Christ's story, we remember the night before his arrest,  
The night of serenity, solemnity, and love.  
Jesus took in his hands bread from the table.  
He broke it and blessed it.

**Many: Eat in remembrance of me, he said.**

One: And after supper,  
As the night grew long,  
Jesus took a cup, and filled it with the fruit of the vine.  
As he blessed it, he spoke aloud to them

**Many: Take and drink and always remember me.**

One: The table is ready. All are welcome. Come, for the feast is spread.

### **\*Sharing of the Elements**

*As the bread and cup are shared, these words are said:*

One: Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven.

**Many: We come to Christ in this and every bread we share.**

One: Let us receive the gift of God, the Cup of Blessing.

**Many: We come to Christ in this and every cup we share.**

### **\*Prayer of Thanksgiving following Communion**

**Divine Light of Our Journey-  
In a spirit of gratitude  
we give thanks for this time at your Holy Meal.  
This time at the Table filled us with strength,  
Knowing that as we continue on this Lenten journey,  
We will find your peace surrounding us.  
Amen.**

## **GOING FORTH**

### **\*Parting Hymn - NCH 198 - Lift High the Cross vv. 1 – 4**

#### **Lift High the Cross**

Author: George William Kitchin, 1827-1912

Reviser: Michael Robert Newbolt, 1916; alt.

Tune: CRUCIFER 10.10. with refrain

Composer: Sydney Hugo Nicholson, 1916

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**Refrain:**

**Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim;  
Let all adore that sacred name.**

**1 Come, Christians, follow where our Savior trod,  
the Lamb victorious, Christ, the Son of God. [Refrain]**

**2 Each newborn servant of the Crucified  
bears on the brow the seal of Christ who died. [Refrain]**

**3 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,  
your death has brought us life eternally. [Refrain]**

**4 Set up your throne, that earth's despair may cease,  
beneath the shadow of its healing peace. [Refrain]**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Now go with the Spirit, from the comfort of this place,  
**Many: so we may go to bring hope to the world.**

One: Now carry the Light of Christ with you,  
**Many: we will go into the shadows with this gift.**

One: Now trust in God who is always with you,  
**Many: we will follow that life called discipleship.**

**\*Postlude – Keith Konet**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**Credits**

- (1) Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share Our Tithes are adapted from *Called to Go! Service Prayers for The Second Sunday in Lent*, written by Dr. Chad Abbott, who serves as Conference Minister for the Indiana Kentucky Conference, United Church of Christ and resides in Indianapolis, Indiana. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in service of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Lenten Candle Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent, was contributed by Jeanyne Slettom, and posted May 27, 2015 on the blog, Process and Faith. <https://processandfaith.org/lenten-candle-liturgy/>
- (3) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship resource for March 5th, 2023*, written by Rev. Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted February 23rd, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution* <http://rev-o-lution.org/>.
- (4) The Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, and the Assurance of Forgiveness, and the Commissioning and Benediction are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for March 5th, 2023 (Lent 2-A)* written by the Rev. Thom M. Shuman, and posted, February 26th, 2023, to his blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) The Invitation to Communion and the Sharing of the Elements, are adapted from *Holy Communion Liturgy for March 6, 2023*, by Maren C. Tirabassi, and posted February 23, 2023 on her blog, *Gifts in Open Hands blog of Maren C. Tirabassi*. <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com>
- (6) The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving/Eucharistic Prayer and The Pouring and Breaking and Serving are adapted from *The Words of the Eucharist*, by Kurt Struckmeyer and posted on February 5th, 2016, on the blog *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/the-word-of-the-eucharist>.

- (7) The Words of Remembering, Table Prayer – The Spirit Transforms, The Pouring and Breaking and Serving, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving following Communion. are adapted from *A Communion Liturgy for Lent*, written by Michelle Torigian and posted March 7, 2021 on the blog, *Michelle L. Torigian ~ God Goes Pop Culture*.  
<https://michelletorigian.com/2021/03/07/a-communion-liturgy-for-lentA->.
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Ministers, *All of Us*  
Scott Rosenstein, *Pastor*  
Betty Funk, *Pianist and Music Director*  
Keith Konet, *Council President*  
Beverly Wurm, *Administrative Assistant*



## NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### God is Still Speaking...

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you will find a spiritual home in this United Church of Christ congregation. WELCOME!

**Tithes and Offerings** - Checks and Money Orders can be made payable to: "Zion United Church of Christ" and mailed to:

**Zion United Church of Christ  
c/o Keith Konet  
1039 Bridlewood Drive  
Copley, OH 44321**

Questions: Contact Keith Konet at 330.604.6939

### Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly began a part-time position with us. She is keeping some limited Office Hours at church/home. The days and hours are:

Monday – 9am – 1pm  
Wednesday – 10am-2 pm  
Thursday – 9am – 1pm

Beverly can be reached at: [zionchurchtremont@gmail.com](mailto:zionchurchtremont@gmail.com) or by phone at: 216-273-7561 (church) or 216-310-6810 (mobile).





## The season of Lent

The day of Ashes marked the opening of Lent in the liturgical season. For six and one half weeks, Christians around the world will prepare themselves spiritually for the celebration of their highest Holy Day: Easter. Many of us will take on spiritual disciplines – prayer, charity, and fasts (make personal sacrifices), focusing through these long days on the sacrifices Jesus made as he set his face toward Jerusalem.

The liturgical calendar is asking us to do this in the Lenten season: prepare ourselves spiritually for our collective celebration of life overcoming death.

The season of Lent invites introspection, an inward act, that often gets made concrete through spiritual disciplines, action, to reinforce their meaning and to translate them into a way of living. If the spiritual transformation is missing, however, the actions become meaningless and a mockery. Repentance, reconciliation, and repair require an inward transformation of mind, body, and spirit - represented by the heart. In ancient Hebrew tradition, the heart reflected more than emotional response; it encompasses both reason and feelings in an integrated fashion.

To rend one's heart is to deliberately open ourselves to revitalized thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. It is to become vulnerable and malleable.

Other faith traditions have something very similar to this: whether it is the arduous month-long fast of Ramadan practiced by Muslims, the 24 hours of fasting practiced by the Jewish people during the annual time of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), or the various means of using fasting for spiritual awakening by many Native American tribes. It seems almost universally accepted that an intentional and thoughtful act of self-sacrifice can not only deepen spiritual connections with the Sacred, but also make us all more mindful of the excesses with which we are prone to live and grow oblivious to.

No matter what your spiritual pathway is, or how you explore and deepen connections to the Sacred, take time to assess your spiritual health. Discover ways that the entrapments of this world burden you – whether in the ongoing and seemingly insatiable pursuit of treasures and pleasures that attract, or in the simple fact that such treasures and pleasures, once acquired, only serve to distract us from our higher callings.

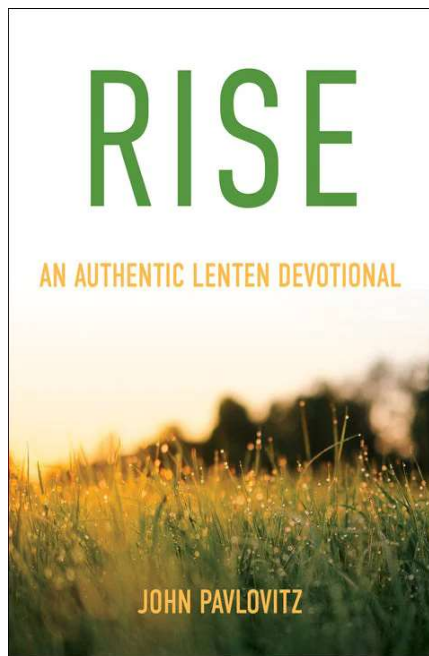
Open yourself up to the ancient rituals that invite us to turn away from things that distract us from, or learn anew spiritual disciplines that focus us on, spiritual awakening.

During this season of Lent, may you be encouraged to lighten your load if it be overladen with excesses that distract; may you be invited into times of spiritual wholeness that come when we are less distracted; and may the Eastertide find you ready to celebrate once again the joy of life overcoming death. May you deepen your relationship with the Sacred on this, your journey Into the Mystic.

## Did you know?

Lent is longer than the 40 days as Sunday was seen as a special feast day to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, so it is excluded from the calculation of Lent. Lent is the Monday to Saturday in the six weeks before Easter Sunday (6 days x 6 weeks = 36 days) and adding the Wednesday to Saturday in the week before brings us to the 40 days.

The Orthodox Christian church has no tradition of ashes - and Holy Week (the week before Easter) is excluded from the calculation of Lent, though Sundays are included. This all means that Lent begins instead on Orthodox Shrove Monday, also known as Clean Monday.



### Rise: An Honest Lenten Devotional

From the bestselling author of *LOW: An Honest Advent Devotional* comes a new devotional for Lent and Easter considering the ways we are called to rise from the depths in our spiritual journey.

In this new Lenten devotional, popular progressive Christian author John Pavlovitz once again takes us on a transformative spiritual journey. Like the human experience, the spiritual journey is not a level path. It is about the falling and the rising. We allow our hopes to rise when we are in the middle of the struggle. We wait for the sun to rise, knowing that joy comes in the morning. We rise to our feet after falling to our knees in desperate prayer. We rise when we are knocked from our feet, persistent in this. We rise to meet the coming day, knowing we are held by a Love that will have the last word. Rise is a 40-day journey of elevated hopes and ascending spirits. Each entry includes scripture and a reflection.

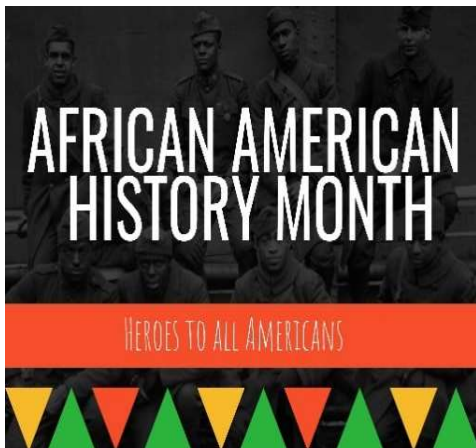
## Please Remember in Prayer

- The Universal Church, its members and mission,
- The nation and all in authority, the leaders of our nation - federal, state, and local.
- For democracy and our democratic institutions and norms in the United States.
- The welfare of the world and the concerns of the local community,
- The interrelationship of Gospel values and civic engagement
- Ministries of the United Church of Christ and of Zion Church.
- The leaders of our church: local, regional, and national, including our Living Water Association UCC, Association General Minister, The Rev. Nayiri Karjian, and Association Faith in Action Minister, The Rev. Michael Howard.
- The ministers and missionaries of the world.
- Those who are refugees and immigrants.
- For children separated from their parents at detention camps along our southern border.
- For racial and religious justice and reconciliation in the United States and around the world.

- Mother Earth and the global reflection on climate disruption.
- For peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world and particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the United States.
- The people of Turkey and Syria : more than 50,000 people have died following two devastating earthquakes that has roads closed and buildings still collapsing. Turkish authorities say some 13.5 million people have been affected in an area spanning roughly 280 miles Rescue teams are battling snow and freezing temperatures to search for survivors as hopes have faded of finding survivors – though rescue teams had been pulling people out alive buried by the earthquakes that struck Turkey and Syria (The US State Department has confirmed that at least 3 Americans are among the dead). At least 44,374 people have died in Turkey. In Syria, authorities reported 5,951 deaths.. Be with all who grieve and mourn the loss of loved ones, homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Please help the survivors to process and move through the trauma, and to rebuild their lives and communities.
- The people of California profoundly impacted by the atmospheric rivers and flooding rains. Be with all who grieve and mourn the loss of loved ones, homes businesses, and infrastructure. Please help the survivors to process and move through the trauma, and to rebuild their lives and communities.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 92 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of February 27th, 2023. In 2022 a total of 648 mass shootings. In 2021 a total of 693 mass shooting incident occurred across the US, in 2020 a total of 611, in 2019 a total of 417, with 337 incidents in 2018. While we pray for the families and friends of those whose lives have been taken in violent acts – and we pray for those injured in body, mind, soul, and spirit – and for their neighborhoods and communities across the United States - We know that our words and prayers are not enough. We must repent for our collective inaction and commit to tirelessly working toward meaningful gun violence prevention.
- For those affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and the omicron variant surge: for all those who are infected and/or sick, and those who are grieving, for all who are affected, all around the world, for essential workers and frontline workers...we pray for comfort, for safety, for health, and for wholeness.
- The residents and management of the San Sofia Apartments who share a campus with us.
- Those anticipating surgery, recovering from surgery, or undergoing medical procedures, tests, or treatments
- Those living in assisted living or in a nursing home
- Those who are homebound and those who are caregivers
- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.
- Those on our church prayer list:
  - Patti Augustine and family
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) in Alliance, Ohio
  - Betty Funk (*our Minister of Music - back with us following surgery*)
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob; friend of Elaine – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - *prayers for recovery*
  - Keith Konet and his brother who suffered a broken humerus from an injury caused by a fallen branch-he has now begun rehab as he heals.

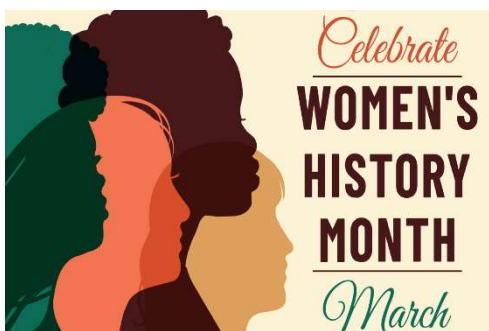
- Marcia Leslie (*neighbor and friend – health concerns*)
- Elaine Lukacs (**has been moved to : Altnheim Skilled Nursing Facility: 18627 Shurmer Road, Room 408 Strongsville, Oh 44136– 440.238-3361 ext.5071**)
- Linda and James Mortach (*Elaine Lukacs' sister & brother-in-law*) & Linda's daughter
- Patricia Matheny (*prayers also for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray and friends, Peggy & Craig Lucas*)
- Barbara Rossington (*move to a new senior housing community*)
- Henry Senyak (*resident community leader – cancer*)
- Debbie Webb (*Debbie fell and suffered a broken femur-- and in a second recent fall, she broke a bone in her arm. She is recovering.*)
- Beverly Wurm and family

## Commemorating African American and Women's History Months



In observance of Women's History Month (March) we continue a series begin in African American History Month (February), where **we are introduced to different African American women leaders, whose faith helped shape their lives, their ministries and their activism.** Join us during our time after the service in the Library where we will learn about people who should be heroes to all Americans.

**Today, March 5th, we will learn of the life and legacy of one of the most important, passionate, and powerful voices of the civil and voting rights movements, and a leader in the efforts for greater economic opportunities for African Americans – Fannie Lou Hamer**



***Fannie Lou Hamer – 1917-1977 - an American voting and women's rights activist, community organizer, and a leader in the civil rights movement. She was the vice-chair of the Freedom Democratic Party, and a leader in the efforts for greater economic opportunities for African Americans***