

# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

March 12, 2023

Third Sunday in Lent

A Service of the Word



***Lenten Cross depicting the Life of Christ***  
***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 12th, 2023  
Third Sunday in Lent  
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“Why belief is so powerful? The power of belief resides in its ability to do four things: Belief creates vision; Belief creates strength of will; Belief creates resilience; and Belief ignites and activates.”  
--Tim Kight—*The Power of Belief*

## WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

*\*please stand as you are able,*

### Welcome and Announcements

Prelude- *Keith Konet*

### \*Call to Worship

One: God of sea and sky, you keep the earth flourishing.

**Many: We come before you weary from traveling through barren lands.**

One: Holy One, you give water that sustains body and spirit.

**Many: You hydrate us when we need, how we need.**

One: Miracle Worker, you caused a rock to crack and bring forth water.

**Many: Crack our hearts open and let your love flow from them like a spring.**

### \*Invocation

Holy One,  
we are thankful for who you are  
and all that you are.  
Your presence is desired here.  
We take joy in knowing that  
you are as close to us as our next breath.  
We thirst for you.  
May we be filled to overflowing  
with your love.  
Amen

**\*Hymn - NCH 547 – Amazing Grace vv. 1, 2, 3, & 4**

**Amazing Grace**

Text: John Newton, 1779; alt.

Tune: AMAZING GRACE (NEW BRITAIN) C.M.

Arranger: Edwin O. Excell

Source: Columbia Harmony, Cincinnati, 1829

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**1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.**

**2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!**

**3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.**

**4 My God has promised good to me,  
whose word my hope secures;  
God will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.**

**LENTEN CANDLE LITURGY**

**Third Sunday in Lent**

**Meditation**

*(Silent time)*

One: As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of violence in the world and to the earth.

*(a candle is extinguished)*

**Lenten Candle Prayer**

One: Let us pray:

**Many: Draw us together in your love, O God. May our restless hearts not resist you,  
but continue to search until they find their rest in you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

**Just As I Am**

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1836; alt.

Tune: WOODWORTH L.M.

Composer: William B. Bradbury, 1849

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**3 Just as I am, you will receive,  
will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relive:  
Because your promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

**A READING OF THE WORD**

**First Reading: Exodus 17:1-7**

*As soon as the Israelites were away from the oppression of Pharaoh, they complained in the wilderness. In this reading, the people can find no water to drink, and they quarrel with Moses. Moses in turn complains to God, wanting to know what to do with the people who want to stone him for their troubles. God instructs Moses to go before the people with some of the elders to the rock at Horeb, where God would stand, and strike the rock with the staff that God gave him in Egypt. Moses obeys God, and water comes out of the rock where God stood, a reminder that God was with them, even though the people questioned it.*

**17** 1 The Israelites left the desert of Syn to travel by stages, as YHWH had directed them. They camped at Rephidim, but found no drinking water.

2 Again they turned on Moses, saying, "Give us drinking water." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test YHWH?"

3 But the people were thirsty, and complained even more to Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt only to make us and our children and our livestock die of thirst?"

4 Moses appealed to YHWH. "What am I to do with these people? They are ready to stone me!"

5 YHWH answered Moses, "Take some of the elders and move to the front of the people. Take with you the staff with which you struck the Nile. Go! 6 I will wait for you there by the rock of Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink."

And Moses did so, in the sight the elders.

7 Moses named the place Massah, "Testing," and Meribah, "Quarreling," for the Israelites tested YHWH when they said, "Is YHWH with us or not?"

**Psalm Response: Psalm 95 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 95 is a song of praise to God the Creator, calling the people into worship and celebration. God has made the whole world as well as us, and as the Great Shepherd we are the sheep of God's hand. The second half of the psalm shifts to words of warning for those who do not listen to*

*God, and for those who test God, as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Because they quarreled and tested God, they wandered for forty years and did not enter the land promised them. For those who do trust in God, the first half of the psalm reminds the listener of God's faithfulness and abundance.*

**95** 1 Come, let us sing joyfully to God!

Raise a shout to our rock, our deliverance!

**2 Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving,  
and sing our praises with joy.**

3 For God is a great God,  
the great Ruler, above all gods.

**4 O God, in your hands are the depths of the earth,  
and the mountain peaks are yours.**

5 Yours is the sea, for you made it,  
the dry land as well, for your hands formed it.

**6 Come, let us bow down in worship;  
let us kneel before God, our Maker.**

7 For you are our God,  
and we are the people you shepherd,  
the flock under your care.  
If only you would hear God's voice today!

**8 "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as in the days of Massah in the desert,**

9 where your ancestors tested me;  
they tested me even though  
they had seen my works.

**10 For forty years that generation provoked me,  
until I said, The hearts of these people go astray,  
and they do not know my ways.'**

11 then I took an oath in anger:  
'they will never come to my place of rest.' "

**Second Reading: Romans 5:1-11**

*The Epistle readings continue in the letter to the Romans, this time in chapter 5. Because believers are justified by faith, they share in the glory of God through Jesus Christ. Even though they may suffer, in their suffering they will still experience the hope of God because they know God's love through Jesus. Even though not all knew Christ, Christ died for all. There is no one who cannot know God's love through Jesus Christ. Paul views Christ's death as a sacrifice that saves everyone, regardless of being under the law or not, and Christ's death reconciles everyone to God. It is not the believer's works, but rather one's faith in Christ that matters.*

**5** 1 Now since we have been made right in God's sight by our faith, we are at peace with God through our Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Because of our faith, Christ has brought us to the grace in which we

now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to the day on which we will become all that God has intended. 3 But not only that—we even rejoice in our afflictions! We know that affliction produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and character, hope. 5 And such a hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

6 At the appointed time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for us godless people. 7 It is not easy to die even for a good person—though of course for someone really worthy, there might be someone prepared to die—8 but the proof of God’s love is that Christ died for us even while we were sinners.

9 Now that we have been justified by Christ’s blood, it is all the more certain that we will be saved by Christ from God’s wrath. 10 For if we were reconciled to God by Christ’s death while we were God’s enemies, how much more certain that we who have been reconciled will be saved by Christ’s life! 11 Not only that, we go so far as to make God our boast through our Savior Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

### **Gospel Reading: John 4:5-42**

*This reading in John 4 contains the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. All sorts of cultural boundaries are crossed in this story: Jesus and the disciples are in a Samaritan village, and Jews did not like Samaritans and vice versa. Jesus was alone and a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well, and Jesus spoke with her—a taboo to speak to a woman alone, especially an unmarried woman and a Samaritan at that! But through the woman’s skepticism and later revelation by Jesus that she’s been married five times and is now living with a man who isn’t her husband, Jesus still chooses to speak to her. Perhaps because as someone who has faced marginalization by the dominant culture as well as by gender and by her marital status, she is able to accept Jesus as the Messiah because he came, even for her. Jesus’s disciples are taken aback by his talking to this Samaritan woman alone, and do not understand his message is to bring spiritual food and water to the world, not just for themselves. The woman meanwhile goes into the village and tells everyone about Jesus, and many come to believe through her word, but others come to believe in their encounter with Christ.*

4 5 Jesus stopped at Sychar, a town in Samaria, near the tract of land Jacob had given to his son Joseph, 6 and Jacob’s Well was there. Jesus, weary from the journey, came and sat by the well. It was around noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.”  
8 The disciples had gone off to the town to buy provisions.

9 The Samaritan woman replied, “You’re a Jew. How can you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?”—since Jews had nothing to do with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered, “If only you recognized God’s gift, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him for a drink instead, and he would have given you living water.”

11 “If you please,” she challenged Jesus, “you don’t have a bucket and this well is deep. Where do you expect to get this ‘living water’? 12 Surely you don’t pretend to be greater than our ancestors

Leah and Rachel and Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it with their descendants and flocks?”

13 Jesus replied, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. 14 But those who drink the water I give them will never be thirsty; no, the water I give will become fountains within them, springing up to provide eternal life.”

15 The woman said to Jesus, “Give me this water, so that I won’t grow thirsty and have to keep coming all the way here to draw water.”

16 Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband and then come back here.”

17 “I don’t have a husband,” replied the woman. “You’re right—you don’t have a husband!” Jesus exclaimed. 18 “The fact is, you’ve had five, and the man you’re living with now is not your husband. So what you’ve said is quite true.”

19 “I can see you’re a prophet,” answered the woman. 20 “Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you people claim that Jerusalem is the place where God ought to be worshiped.”

21 Jesus told her, “Believe me, the hour is coming when you’ll worship Abba God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You people worship what you don’t understand; we worship what we do understand—after all, salvation is from the Jewish people. 23 Yet the hour is coming—and is already here—when real worshipers will worship Abba God in Spirit and truth. Indeed, it is just such worshipers whom Abba God seeks. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth.”

25 The woman said to Jesus, “I know that the Messiah—the Anointed One—is coming and will tell us everything.”

26 Jesus replied, “I who speak to you am the Messiah.”

27 The disciples, returning at this point, were shocked to find Jesus having a private conversation with a woman. But no one dared to ask, “What do you want of him?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

28 The woman then left her water jar and went off into the town. She said to the people, 29 “Come and see someone who told me everything I have ever done! Could this be the Messiah?” 30 At that, everyone set out from town to meet Jesus.

31 Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.” 32 But Jesus told them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.” 33 At this, the disciples said to one another, “Do you think someone has brought him something to eat?” 34 Jesus explained to them, “Doing the will of the One who sent me

and bringing this work to completion  
is my food.

35 Don’t you have a saying,  
‘Four months more  
and it will be harvest time’?  
I tell you,

open your eyes and look at the fields—  
they're ripe and ready for harvest!  
36 Reapers are already collecting their wages;  
they're gathering fruit for eternal life,  
and sower and reaper will rejoice together.  
37 So the saying is true:  
'One person sows; another reaps.'  
38 I have sent you to reap  
what you haven't worked for.  
Others have done the work,  
and you've come upon the fruits of their labor."

39 Many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus on the strength of the woman's testimony—that "he told me everything I ever did." 40 The result was that, when these Samaritans came to Jesus, they begged him to stay with them awhile. So Jesus stayed there two days, 41 and through his own spoken word many more came to faith. 42 They told the woman, "No longer does our faith depend on your story. We've heard for ourselves, and we know that this really is the savior of the world."

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

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

### **Reflection – In the Most Unlikely Places, Through the Most Unexpected Voices** - The Rev. Scott Rosenstein

#### **We Respond**

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

**God of Transformation,  
as we near the edge  
of winter into spring in the north,  
and summer into fall in the south of the world,  
we know that you make all things new.  
The world is about to become bright and beautiful,  
but we cannot see it yet.  
In our own lives we may be facing struggles and challenges  
that dim our worldview.  
Remind us, O Loving One,  
that even if we cannot envision the bright boldness  
of life in the world,  
we can trust in the promises you have made us.  
We know that your love is beyond measure,**



your greatness far beyond what we can imagine.  
And you will transform this time for us:  
if it is of bleakness, you will bring light.  
It is of shadow, you will bring hope.  
If it is of mourning, you will bring dancing.  
Even if we cannot comprehend joy in this time,  
we know it will return,  
for you are a God worthy of praise and glory,  
and you have made us in your image,  
awesome and wonderful.  
We pray in your name, now and always.  
Amen.

**\*Hymn – NCH 223 - What Wondrous Love is This**

**What Wondrous Love is This**

Source: 19th century, United States; alt.; First published in Mercer's Cluster, 1836

Tune: WONDROUS LOVE (CHRISTOPHER) 12.9.12.12.9.

Source: Appendix to Wm. Walker's Southern Harmony, c. 1843;

Harmonization © 1993 The Pilgrim Press

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**1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this!  
that Christ should come in bliss  
to bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,  
to bear the heavy cross for my soul!**

**2 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing,  
to God and to the Lamb, I will sing;  
To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am,  
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;  
while millions join the theme, I will sing.**

**3 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
and when from death I'm free, I'll sing on!  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,  
and through eternity, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
and through eternity I'll sing on!**

**Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God gives of Godself freely, so let us give freely to God. Let us bring gifts that sustain the life of the kin-dom. May these resources be more than enough. 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**

Fount of Blessing,  
receive our gifts in the joy  
that we give them.  
Be it time, tithe, or talent,  
it all comes from you.  
Thank you for blessing us  
to be a blessing to you and each other.  
Amen.

**Choral Hymn - NCH 197 – Jesus Keep me near the Cross**

Author: Fanny Crosby, 1869; alt.  
Tune: NEAR THE CROSS 7.6.7.6. with refrain  
Composer: William H. Doane, 1869  
Choir: Barbara Rossington, and Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist: Keith Konet

**\*Prayers of the People**

**\*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.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn – NCH 597 – Shall We Gather at the River vv. 1, 2, & 3**

### **Shall We Gather at the River**

Text: Robert Lowry, 1864; alt.

Tune: HANSON PLACE 8.7.8.7. with refrain

Composer: Robert Lowry, 1864

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**1 Shall we gather at the river,  
where bright angel feet have trod,  
with its crystal tide forever  
flowing by the throne of God?**

#### **Refrain:**

**Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
the beautiful, the beautiful river,  
Gather with the saints at the river  
that flows by the throne of God.**

**2 On the margin of the river,  
washing up its silver spray,  
we will walk and worship ever,  
all the happy golden day. [Refrain]**

**3 As we reach the shining river,  
lay we every burden down;  
grace our spirits will deliver,  
and provide a robe and crown. [Refrain]**

### **\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Let us go now, to meet all thirsting for God.

**Many: We will share the living water with everyone we meet.**

One: Let us go now, to listen as Jesus does with us.

**Many: We will hear the stories and hearts of all  
who are considered voiceless by our world**

One: Let us go now, to bring the Spirit's wholeness to others.

**Many: We will bring peace and healing to those who are broken and lonely,  
even as they offer us hope and grace by their lives. Amen.**

### **\*Postlude – Keith Konet**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Invocation, Call to worship, Invitation to Share Our Tithes, and blessing of the gifts are adapted from *Give Us Water: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday in Lent*, written by The Rev. Tena T. Nock, Associate Pastor of Digital Ministry, First United Church of Tampa, United Church of Christ.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship resources for March 12th, 2023*, written by Rev. Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 3rd, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lution.org/>.
- (3) Lenten Candle Liturgy – Third Sunday in Lent is adapted from *Lenten Candle Liturgy*, contributed by Jeanyne Slettom, and posted May 27, 2015 on the website, *Process & Faith*. <https://processandfaith.org/lenten-candle-liturgy/>
- (4) Commission and Benediction are adapted from *Alternate texts Liturgy w/communion from March 6th, 2023*, written by the Rev. Thom M. Shuman, and posted March 12, 2023, to his blog, *Lectionary Liturgies* <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #A-736636. All publishing rights reserved .

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 placed in the offering basket or 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 (2700 W.14<sup>th</sup>)/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,

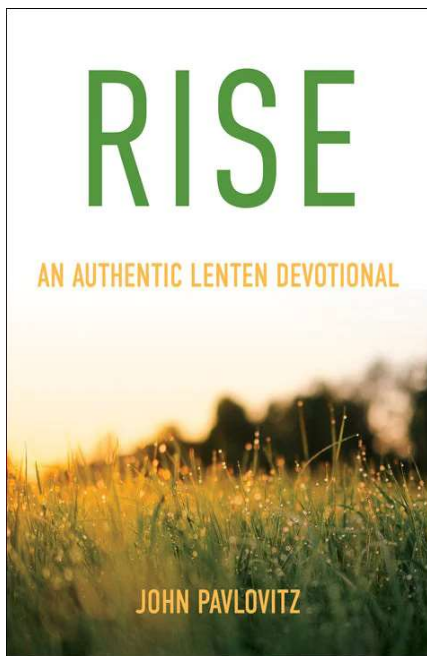
or learn anew spiritual disciplines that focus us on, spiritual awakening.

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 46-day journey of elevated hopes and ascending spirits. Each entry includes scripture and a reflection.

## Please Remember in Prayer

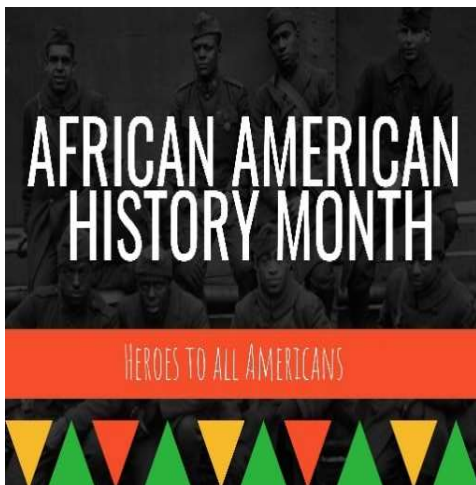
- The Universal Church, its members and mission,
- The nation and all in authority, the leaders of our nation - federal, state, and local.
- For democracy and our democratic institutions and norms in the United States.
- The welfare of the world and the concerns of the local community,
- The interrelationship 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. Hopes of finding people alive have dimmed and experts fear the toll could rise sharply. Turkish authorities say some 13.5 million people have been affected in an area spanning roughly 280 miles from Adana in the west to Diyarbakir in the east, and 186 miles from Malatya in the north to Hatay in the south. At least 44,374 deaths have been reported in Turkey, while 5,800 951 people have died in Syria. The US State Department has confirmed that 3 Americans are among the dead. 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, flooding rains and winter storms and snow. 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 105 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of March 8th, 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 and various variant surges: 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*)

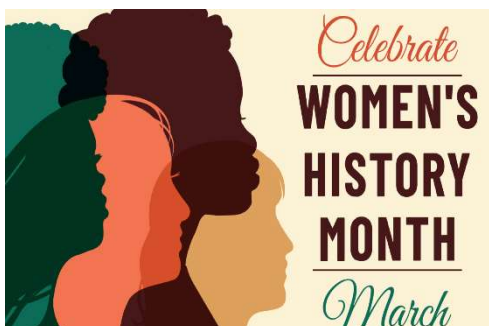
- Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister.
- Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - *prayers for recovery*.
- Keith Konet and his brother who suffered a broken humerus from an injury caused by a fallen branch - he has undertaken rehab as he heals.
- Marcia Leslie (*neighbor and friend – health concerns*)
- **Elaine Lukacs (has been moved to : Altenheim 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.

**In the next session, 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. Our thanks to Bob Bucklew for these series of presentations!**







***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***

March 9, 2023

## Overcoming the Reign of Death: A Lenten Journey

From Michael Howard, Minister of Faith in Action, Living Water Association, Ohio NorthEast, UCC



The season of Lent is a time of introspection and a collective call to prayer. It is an invitation to pray for the Spirit to reveal God's heart for the brokenness in the world around us and empower us to respond faithfully. Those prayers come to life as we meditate on Jesus' journey through the gospel from the Mount of Transfiguration to his destination in Jerusalem, Israel's ancient and sacred "City of Shalom."

In the gospel story, however, Jerusalem was not the place of peace God called it to be. It was, as Jesus put it, the place where prophets go to be executed. Jerusalem was supposed to be a thin place where people experience the overlap of heaven and earth. Instead, our Lenten destination is the site of the bodily trauma of the innocent subjects of Roman occupation. According to our gospel narrative, in the crucifixion of Christ, "the veil was torn" and the world could finally see how imperialism and religious cooptation worked together to bring about the torture, terror, and humiliation of God. It was the reign of the power of Death on display for the world to see.

For me, the Lenten journey is a call to reflect on how the places we inhabit are ruled by the power of Death—with a capital "D." In my home city of Akron, the rule of Death was on full public display last week.

In June, Jayland Walker, an unarmed Black man, was crucified by Akron police. After months of bitter tears, community gatherings, and countless protests, our city's collective grief became our public cry. Thanks to the efforts of clergy and local leaders across the city, along with 62% of the voting public, our City Charter was changed. That change required City Council to name the members of a police oversight board. At the eleventh hour, all of the present white men on Council refused to vote in favor of the proposed slate. They aimed to remove the only individual who shared Jayland Walker's demographic: a highly credentialed attorney named Imokhai Okolo. The institutional racism was named and clearly articulated multiple times during the Council Meeting, which failed to meet the Charter's deadline.

Interpreted through the lens of the Lenten journey, this situation ripped open the veil that normally hides the allegiance of our institutions to the rule of Death that imposes its reign on our communities. William Stringfellow—a civil rights lawyer, organizer and prominent voice in the anti-war, civil rights, and labor movements of the 1960s and 70s—called the power of Death a perversion, a corruption, and a distortion of God's creation; it is "the idolatry of this present age." He believed that the reign of Death over creation is the principal power that the Resurrection overcomes. With our eyes fixed on the promise on the other side of the cross, Lent can be more than a time of lament, it can be our reminder of the Resurrection promise—with a capital "R"—that Death will not win in the end; that the places God loves can still become places of Resurrection; that the places we love can still become places of justice and joy, compassion and peace.

In 1968, a congregation in Baltimore gathered for prayer during the trial of the Catonsville Nine. On trial were nine catholic activists who had burned draft files earlier that year in protest of the Vietnam War. During the prayer service, Stringfellow implored them:

*"Remember, now, that the State has only one power it can use against human beings: death. The State can persecute you, prosecute you, imprison you, exile you, and execute you. All of these mean the same thing. The State can consign you to death. The grace of Jesus Christ in this life is that death fails. There is nothing the State can do to you or to me, which we need fear."*

In the Resurrection, Death as the controlling and dominating power in the world is defeated. With Easter ahead of us, the Resurrection calls us to take to heart the promise that the powers of Death we experience in our world do not get the final word. All is not lost, Resurrection is ahead, and these cities of ours under Death's reign today can still rise to become cities of peace and justice tomorrow.