

# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

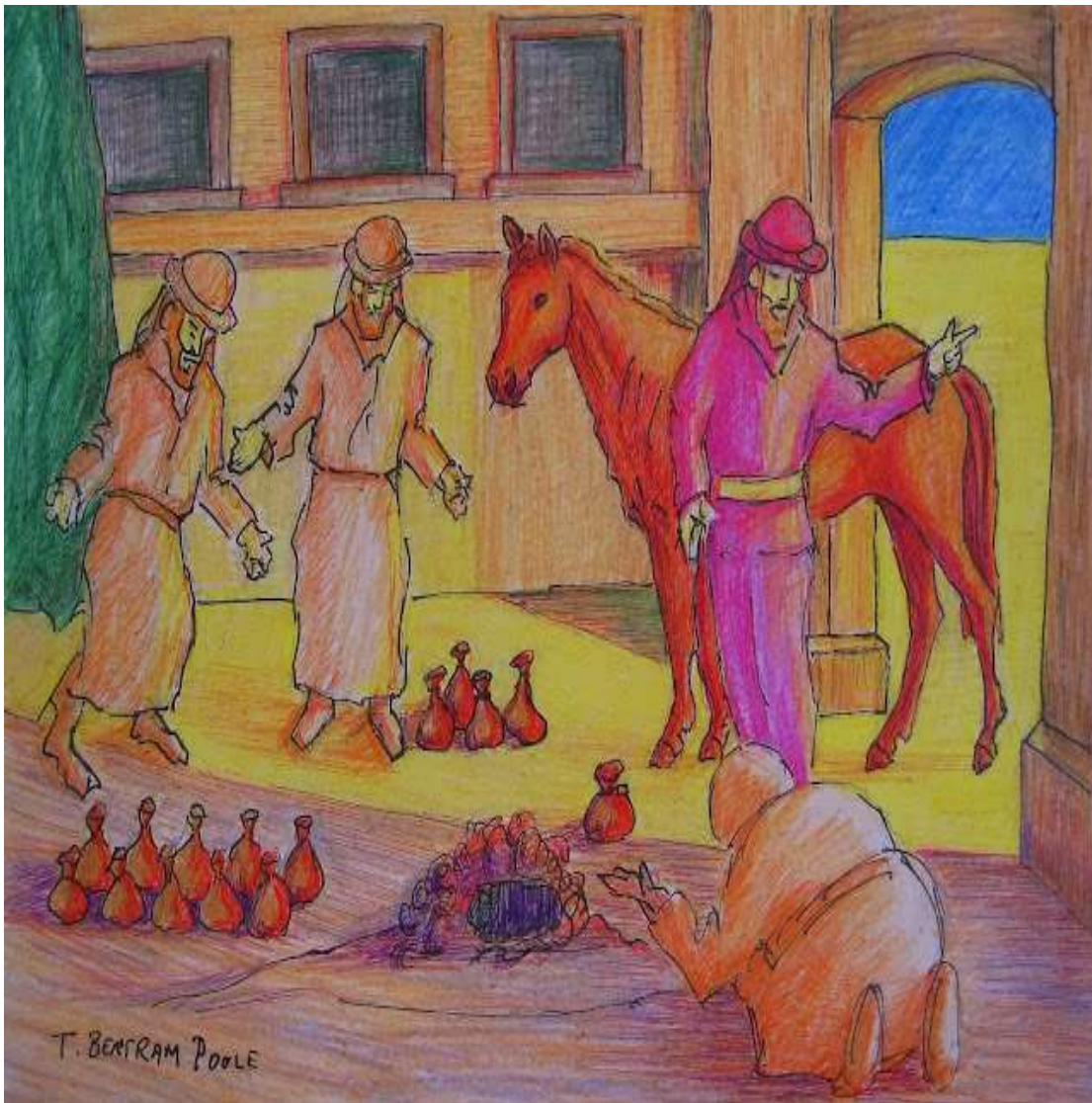
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

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Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.



We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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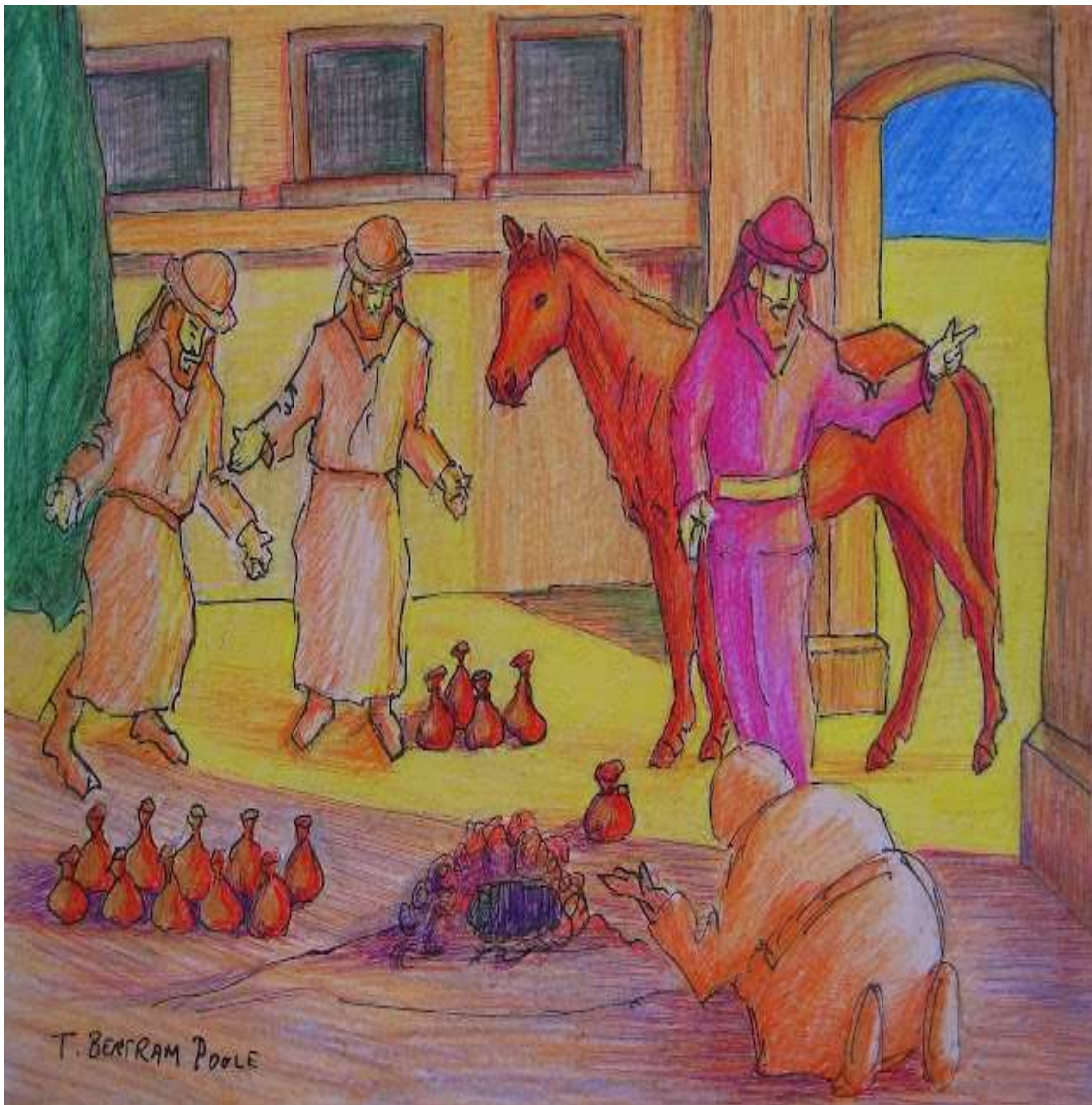
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- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

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**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
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You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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



## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

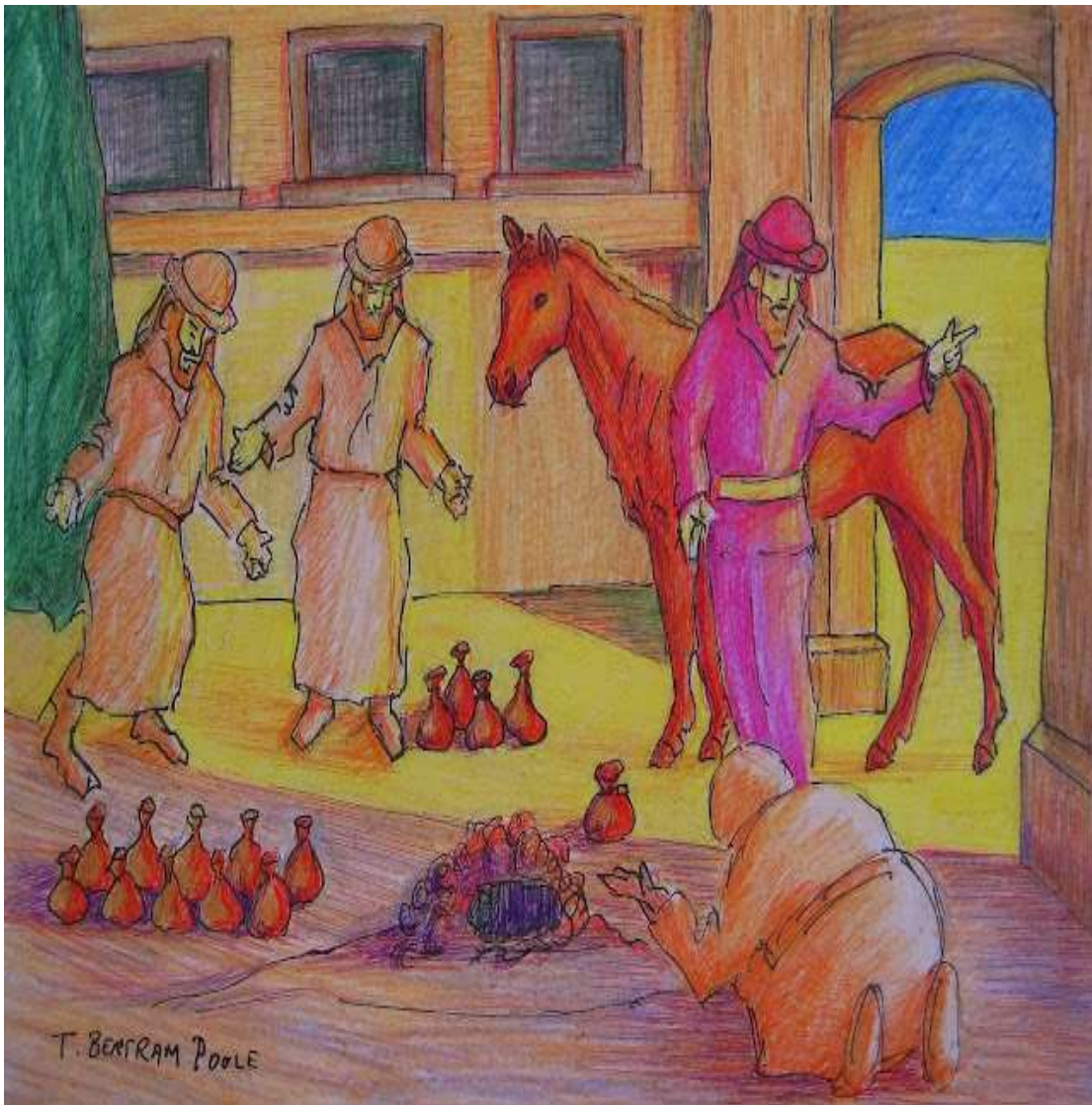
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—



**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the



town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

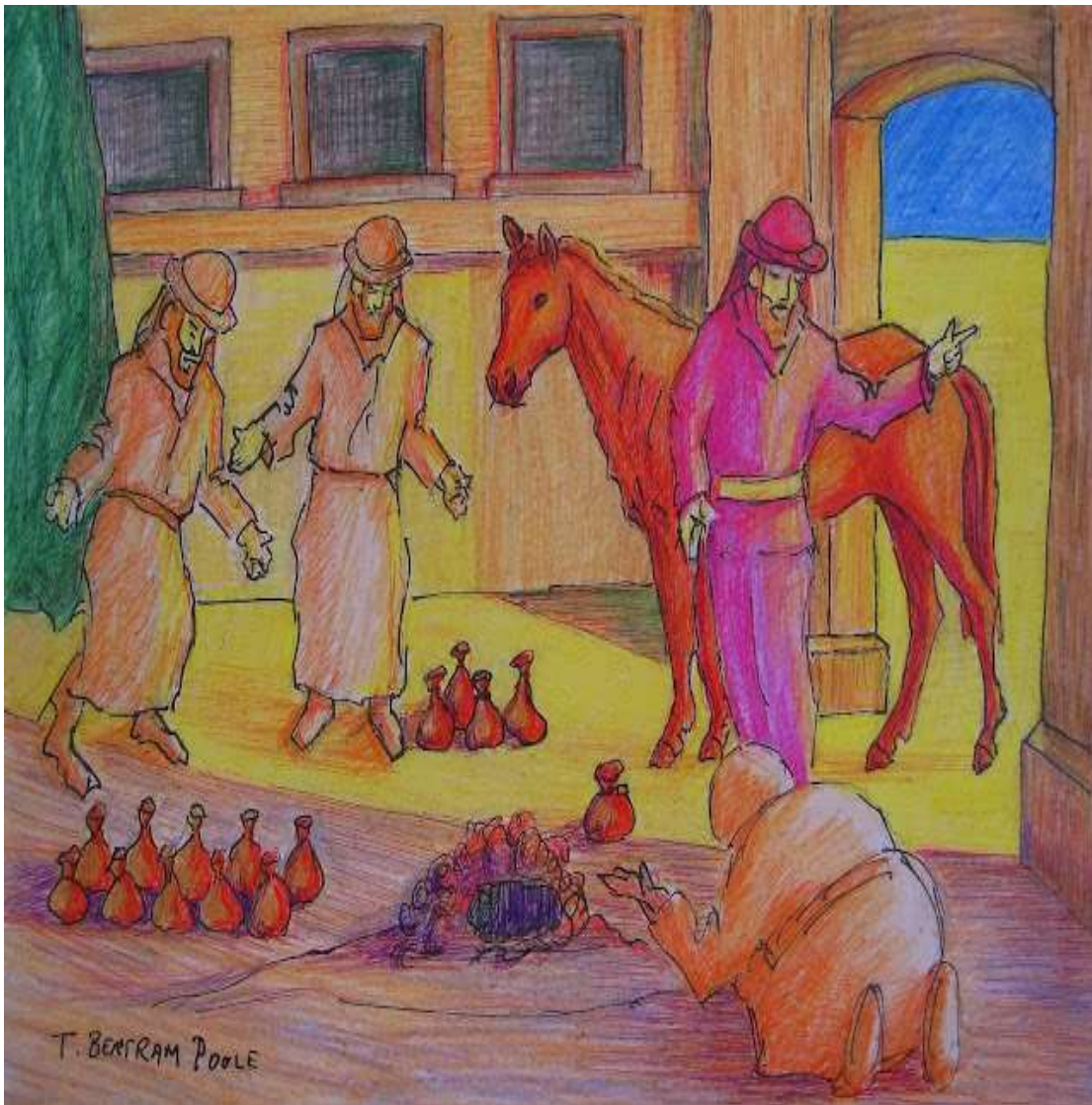
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
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#### **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'



26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

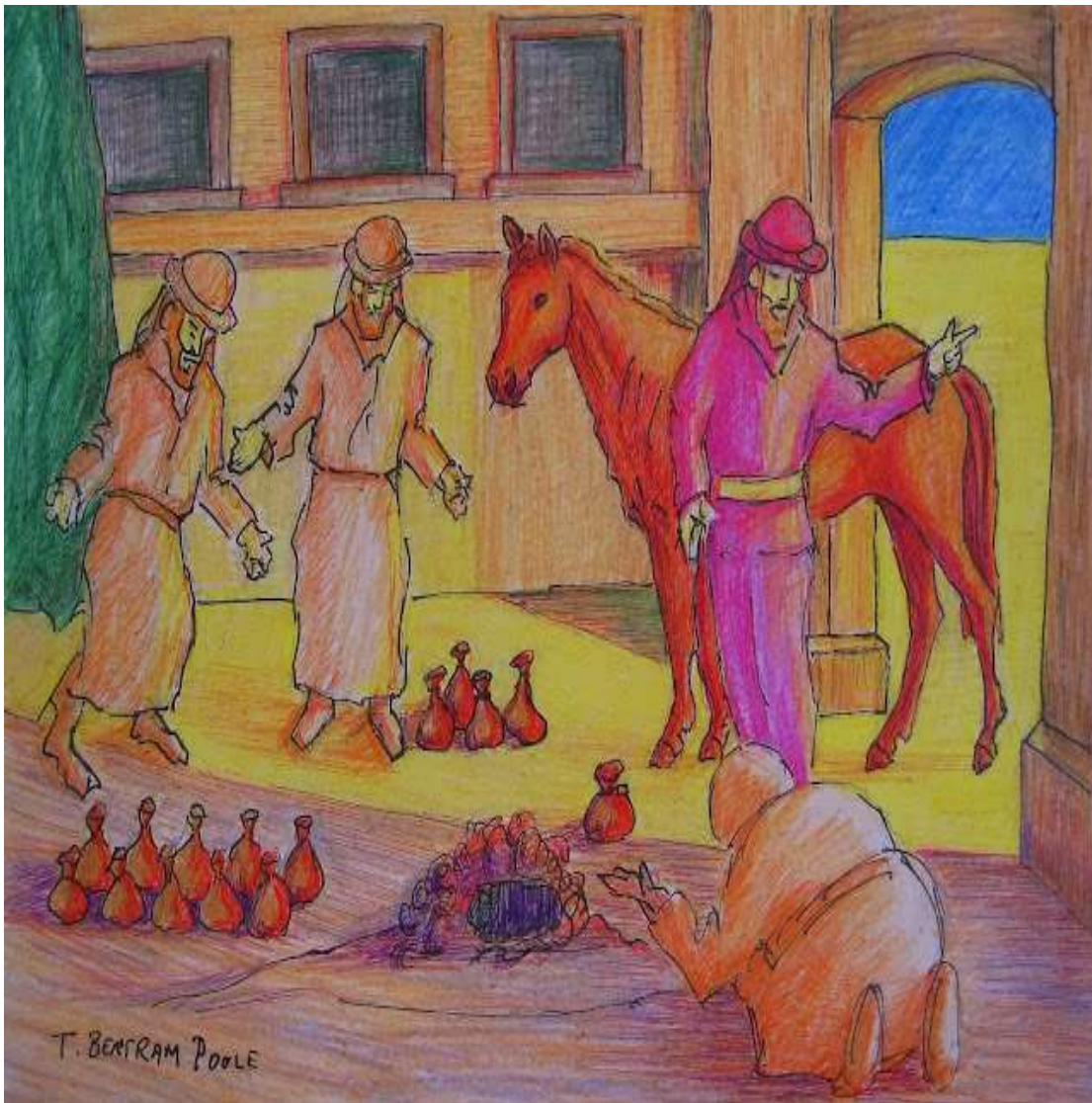
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## ***The Parable of the Talents***

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

**\*Prayer of Response**

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

**\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

**Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

**The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.



We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

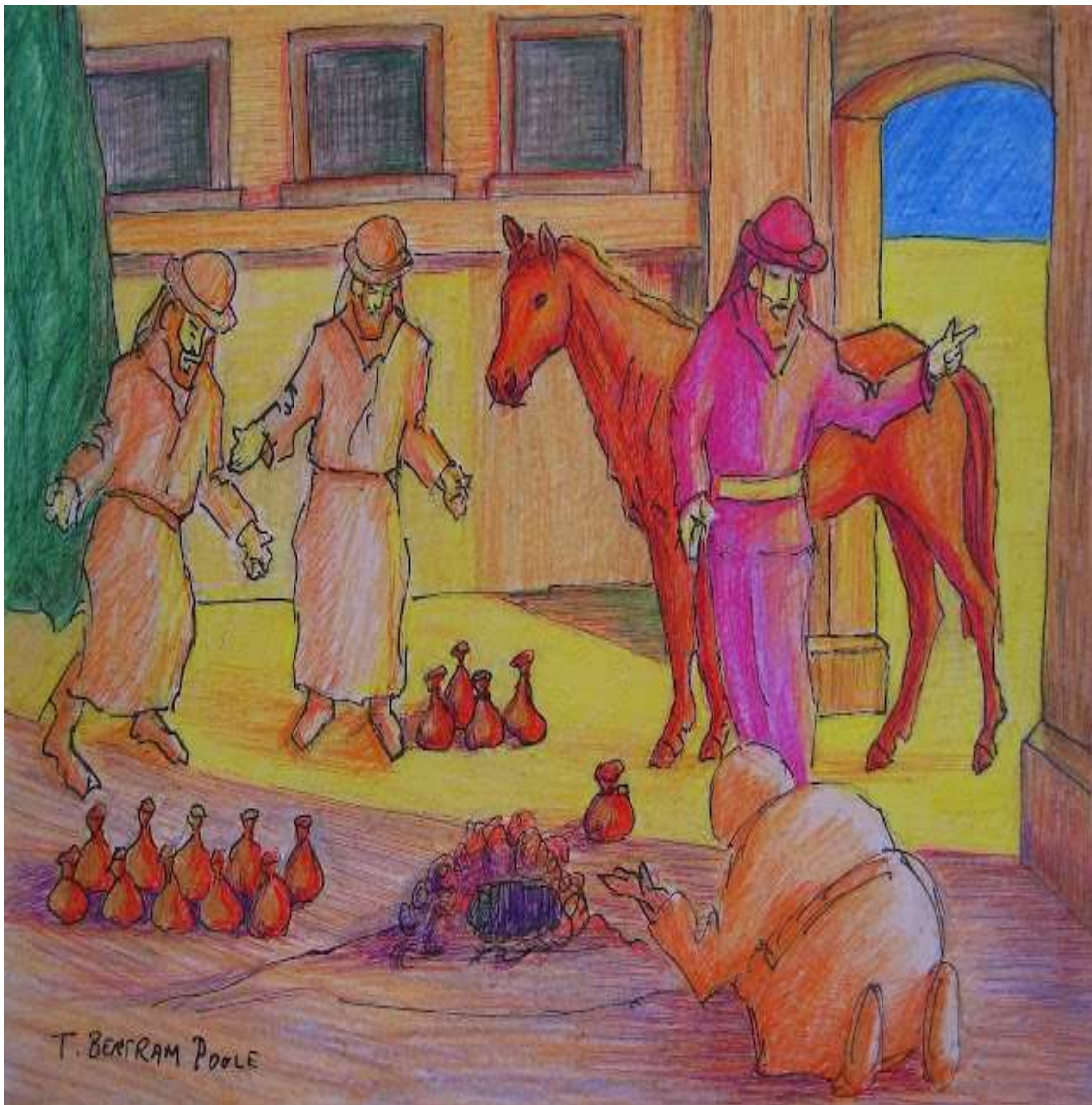
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**



You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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



## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

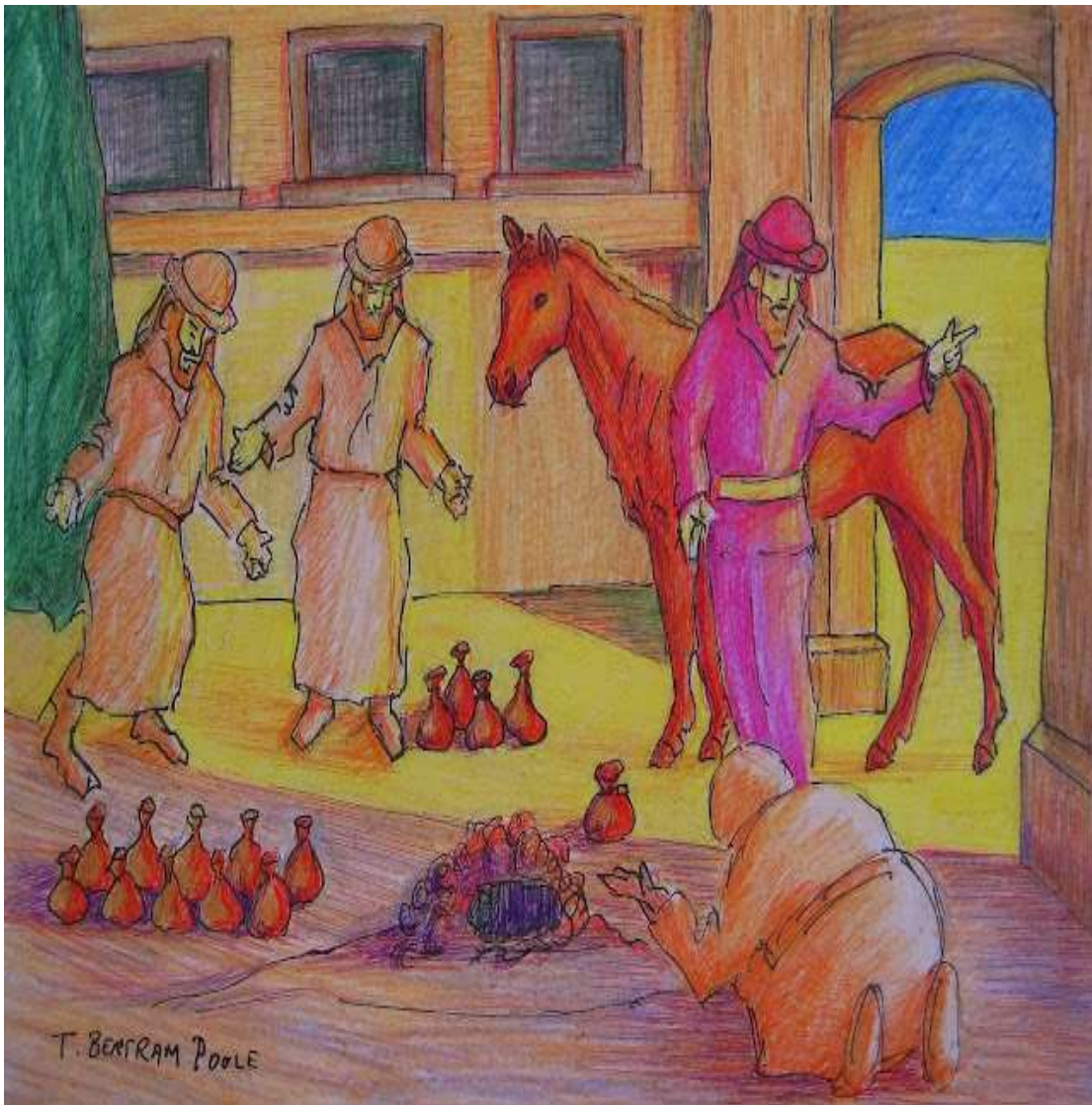
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—



**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

#### **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the



town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

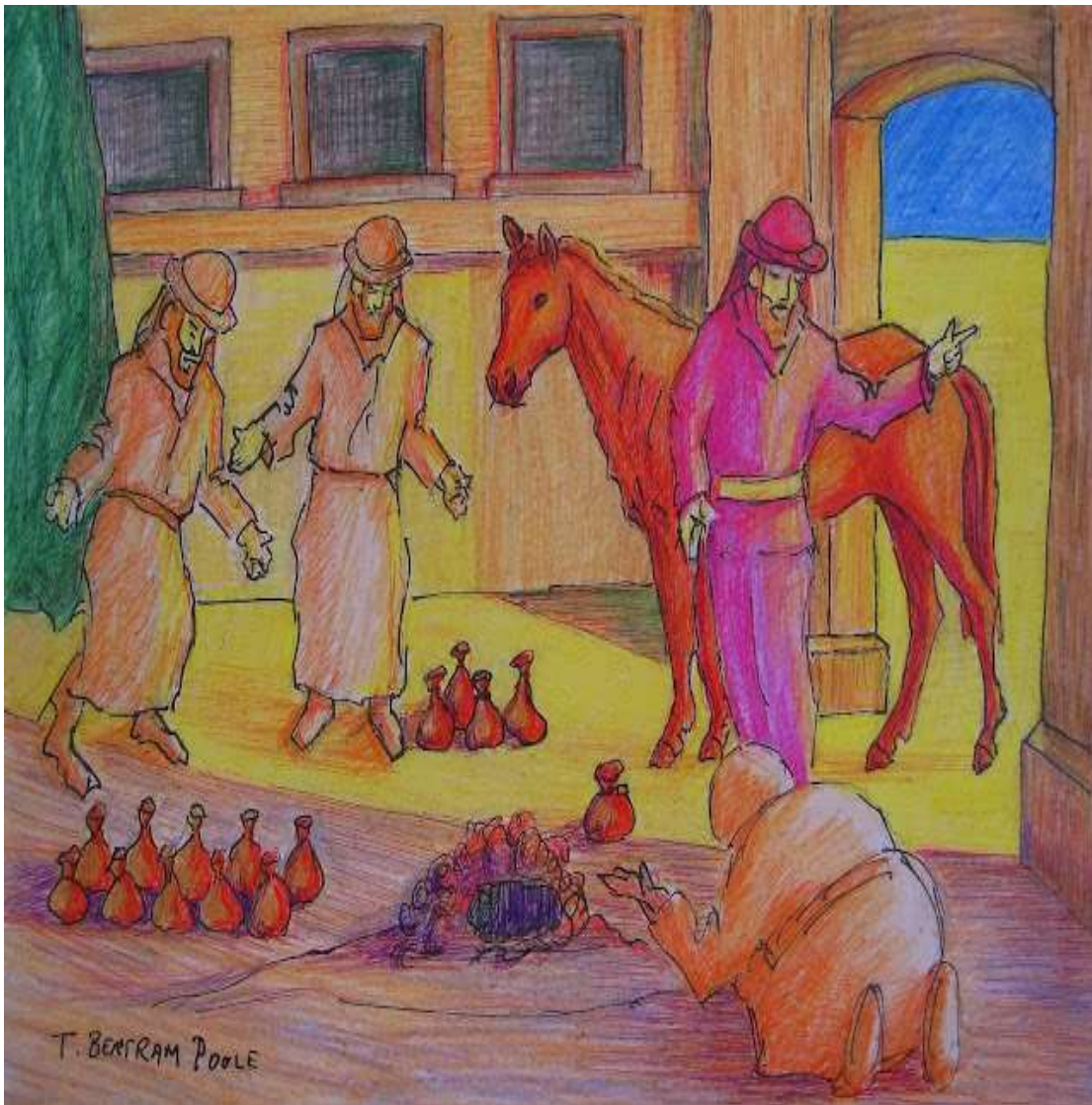
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'



26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

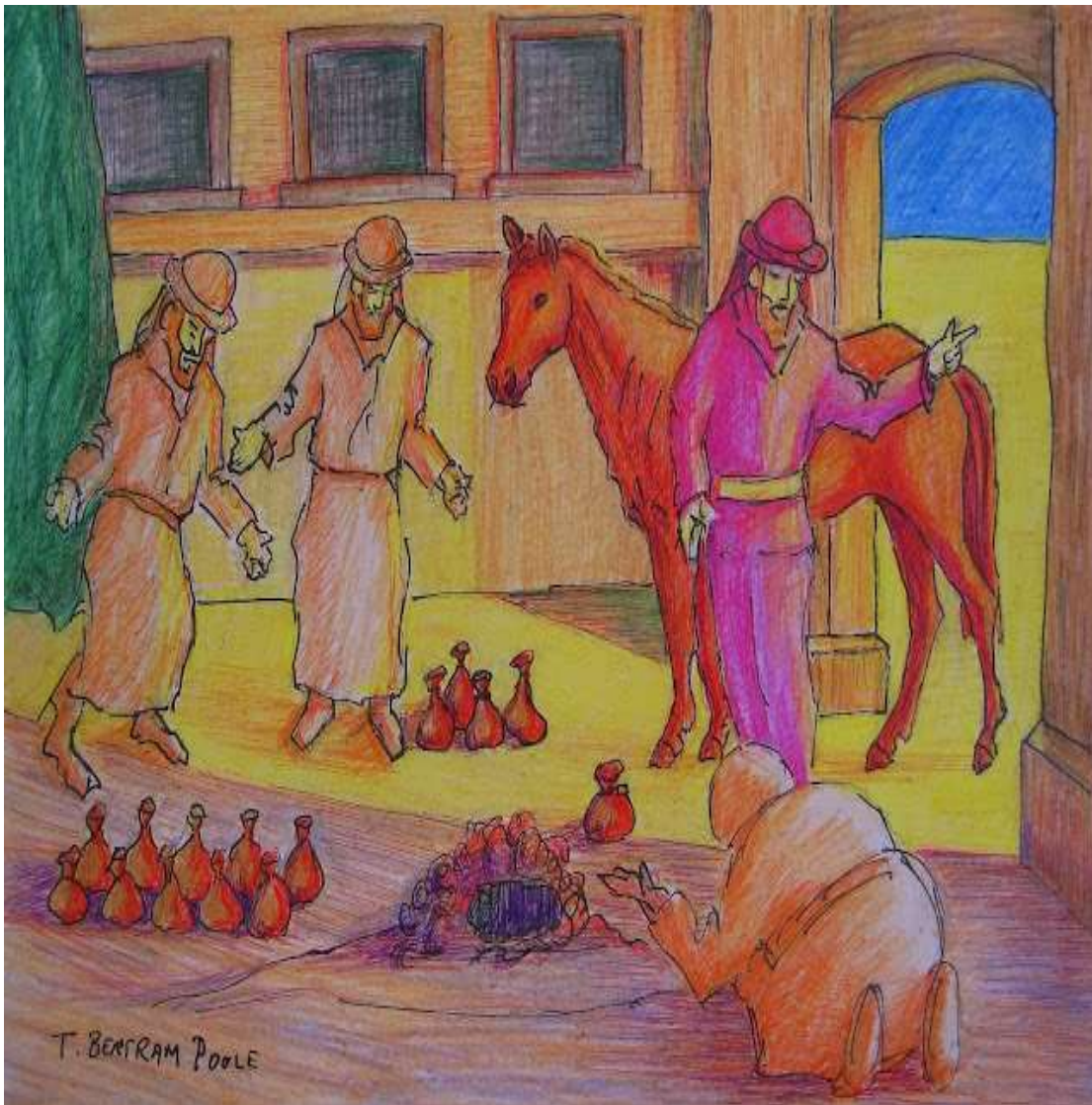
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



**November 19th, 2023**

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)**

**Thanksgiving Sunday**

**A Service of the Word**

## **WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

**- A. R. Bernard**

*\*Please stand as you are able*

### **Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

### **Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

### **\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

#### **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.



We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

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- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

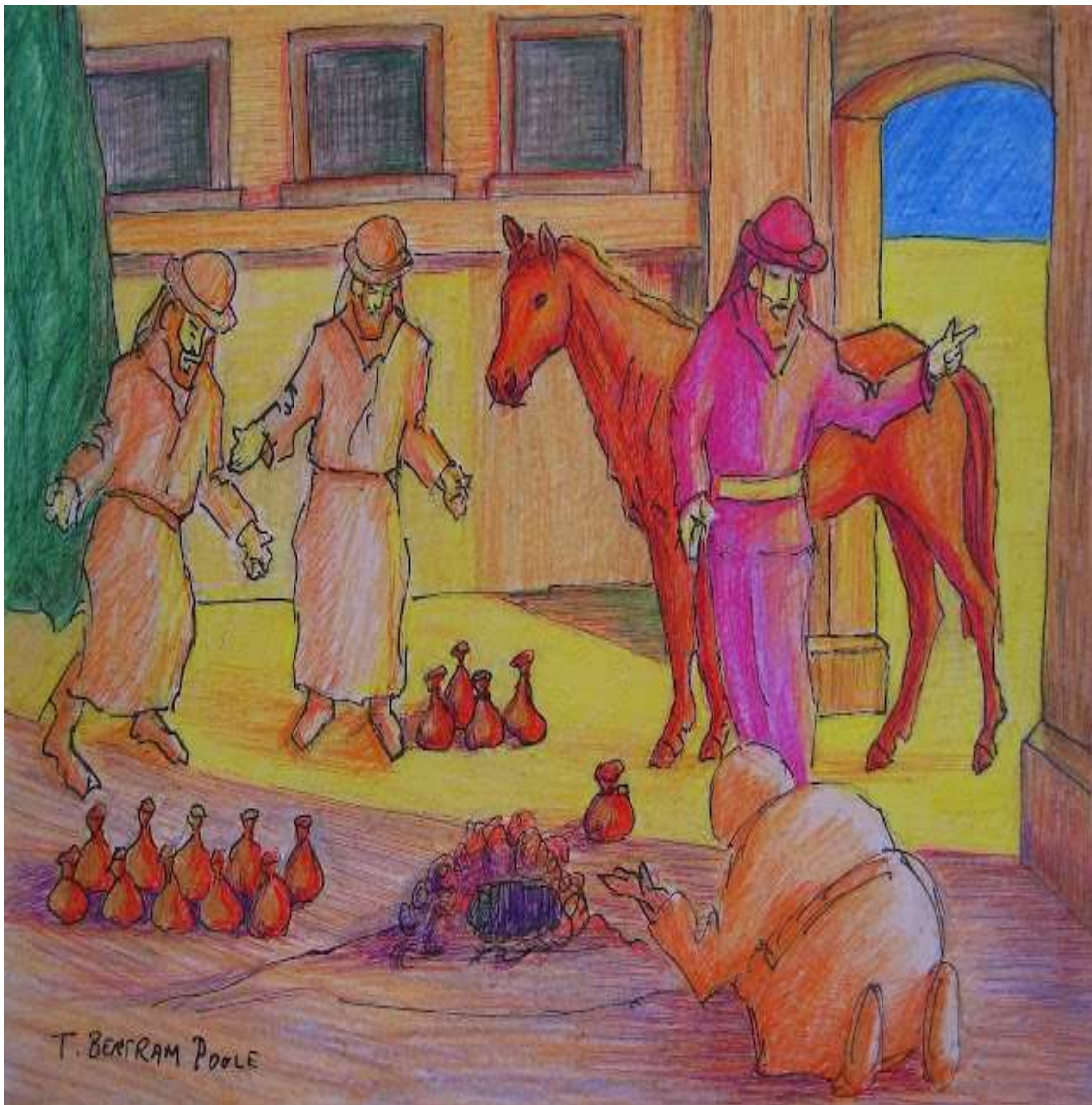
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**



You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
“YHWH has no power for good or for evil.”
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

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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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

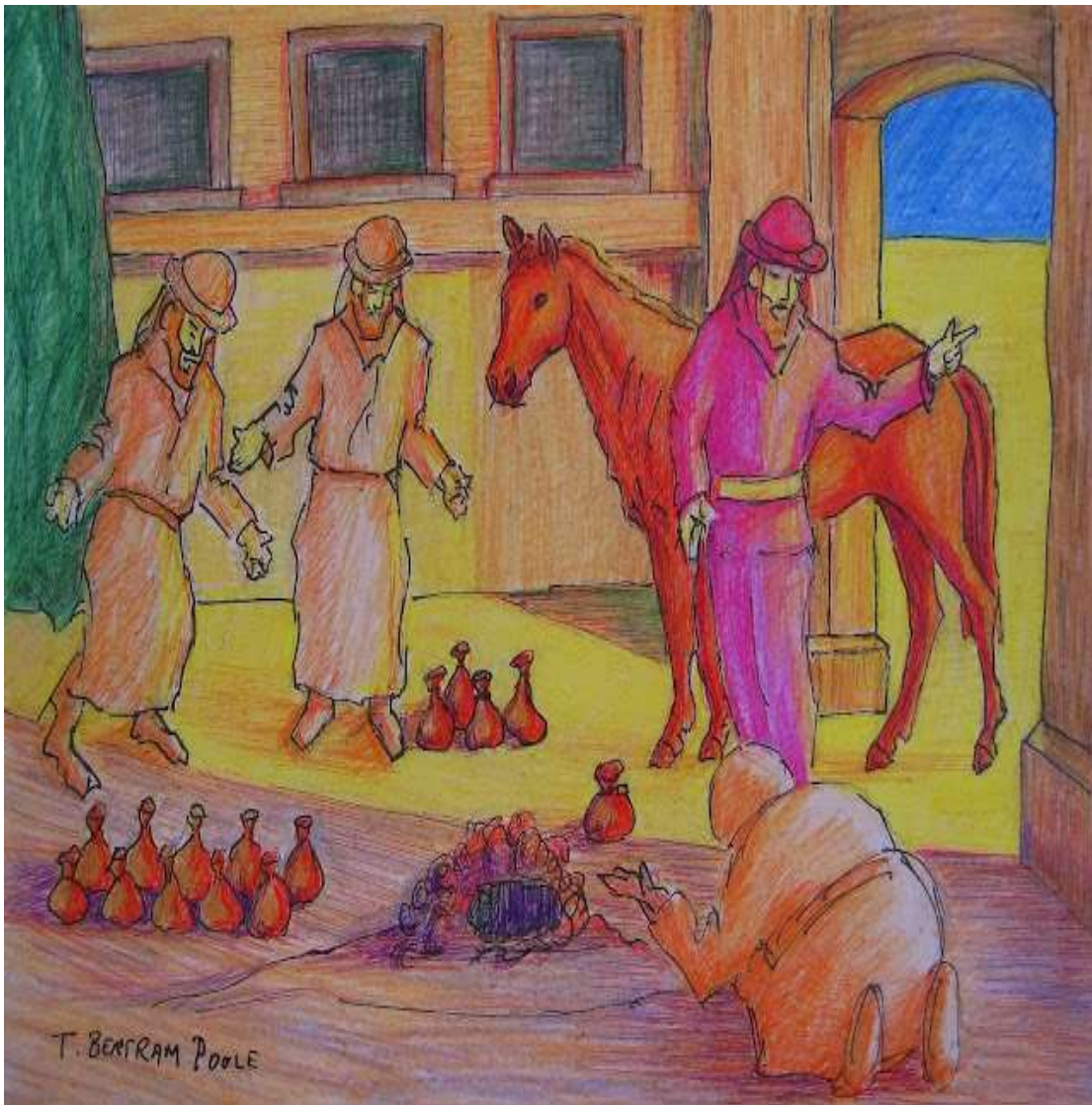
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—



**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 9am – 1pm

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- The leaders of our church: local, regional, and national, including The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
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town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

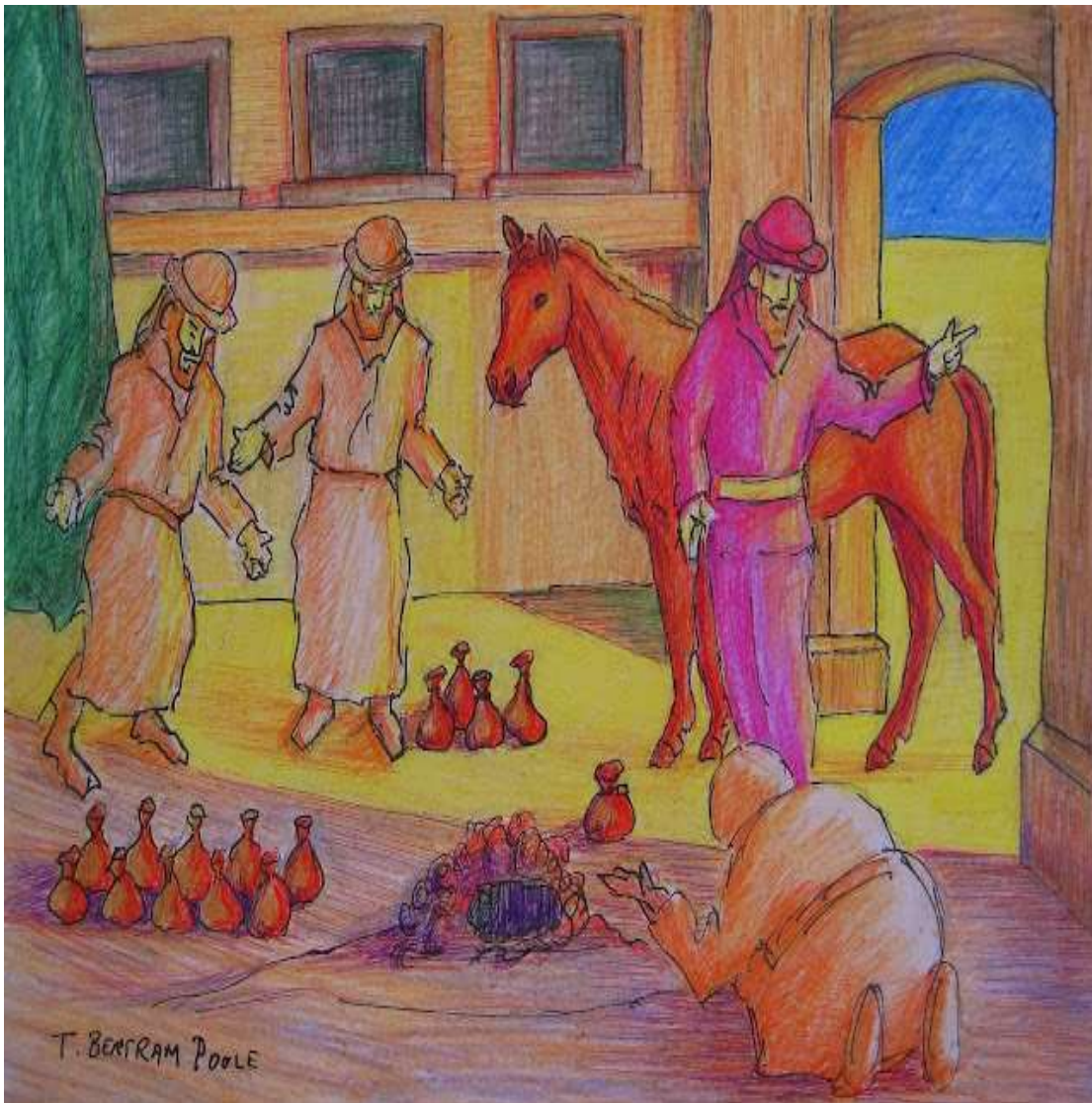
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

**November 19th, 2023**

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)**

**Thanksgiving Sunday**

**A Service of the Word**

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

**- A. R. Bernard**

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'



26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
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- For racial and religious justice and reconciliation in the United States and around the world.
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- For peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world and particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the United States.
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- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

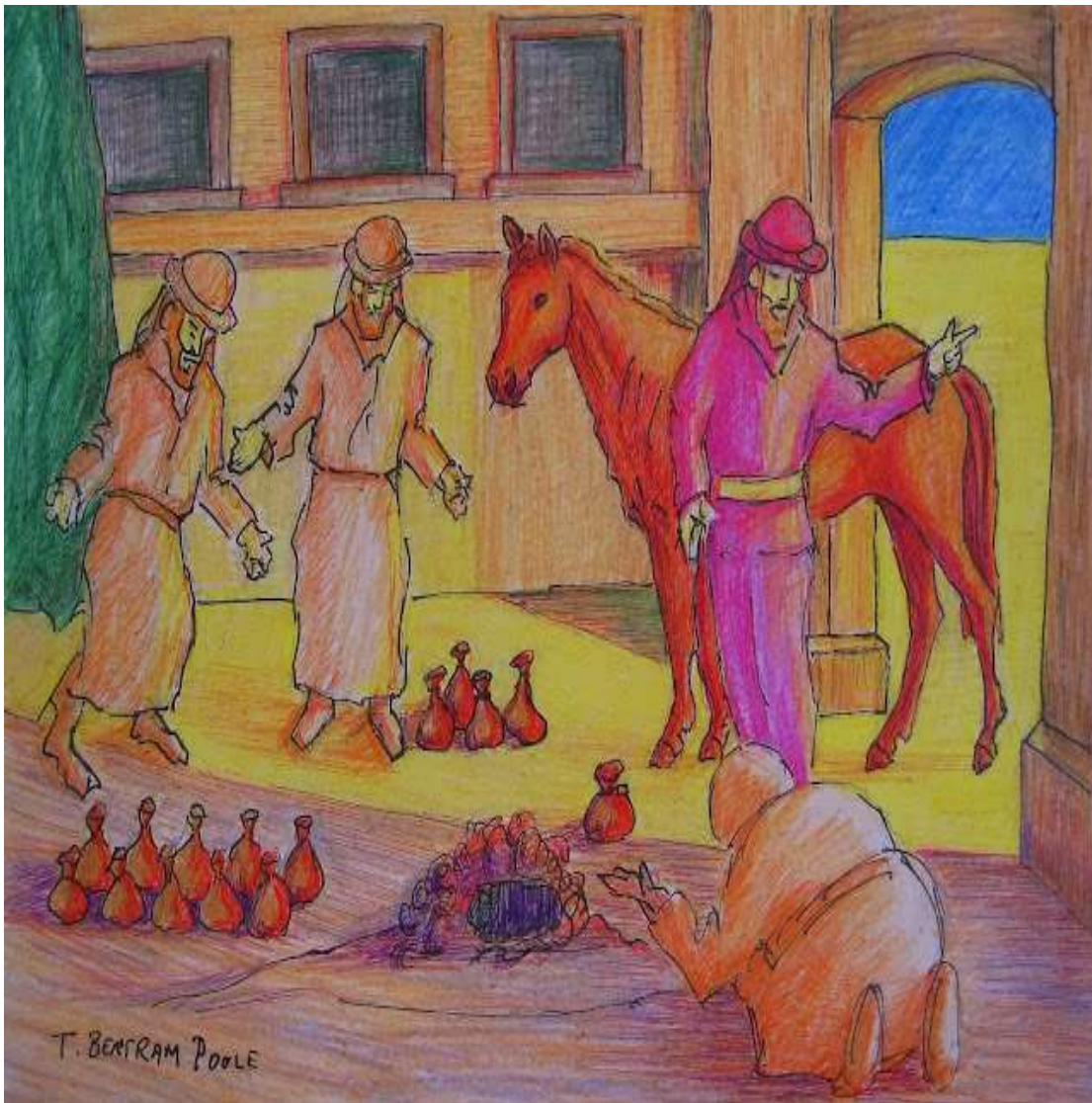
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## ***The Parable of the Talents***

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

#### **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.



We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
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- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.

- Those on our church prayer list:
  - Patti Augustine (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

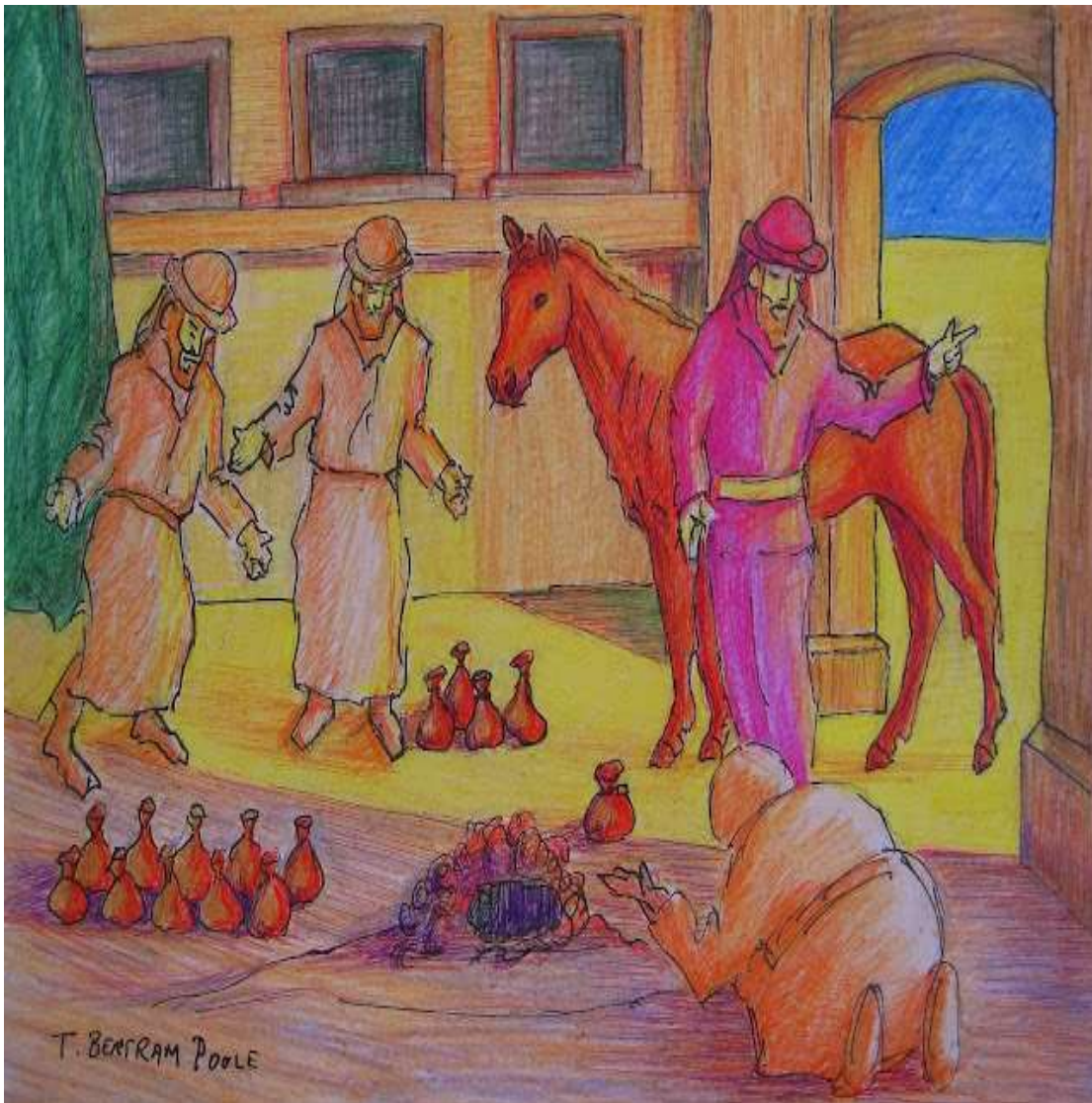
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## ***The Parable of the Talents***

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**



You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
“YHWH has no power for good or for evil.”
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

#### **Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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



## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

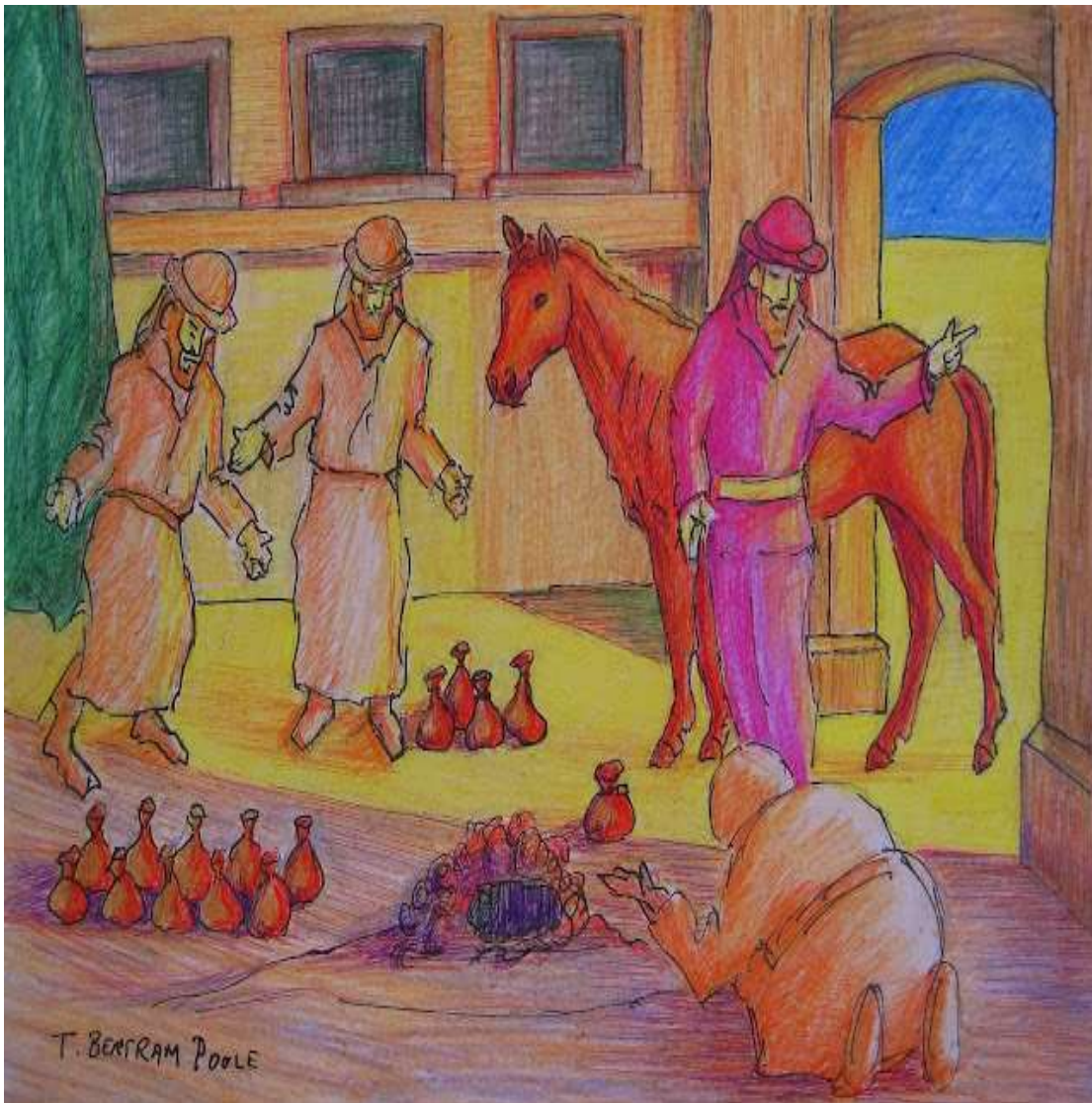
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Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
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**A Service of the Word**

## **WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

**- A. R. Bernard**

*\*Please stand as you are able*

### **Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

### **Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

**Many: Everlasting God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

### **\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
there is fullness of joy,  
comfort for those in despair,  
and peace in the midst  
of chaos and confusion.**

You do not abandon us  
in time of need  
or of celebration.  
We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

- 1** 7 Remain silent in the presence of Sovereign YHWH,  
for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
and set apart those invited.
- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—



**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'

26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

**\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

**The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

\* \* \* \* \*

## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the



town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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# ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

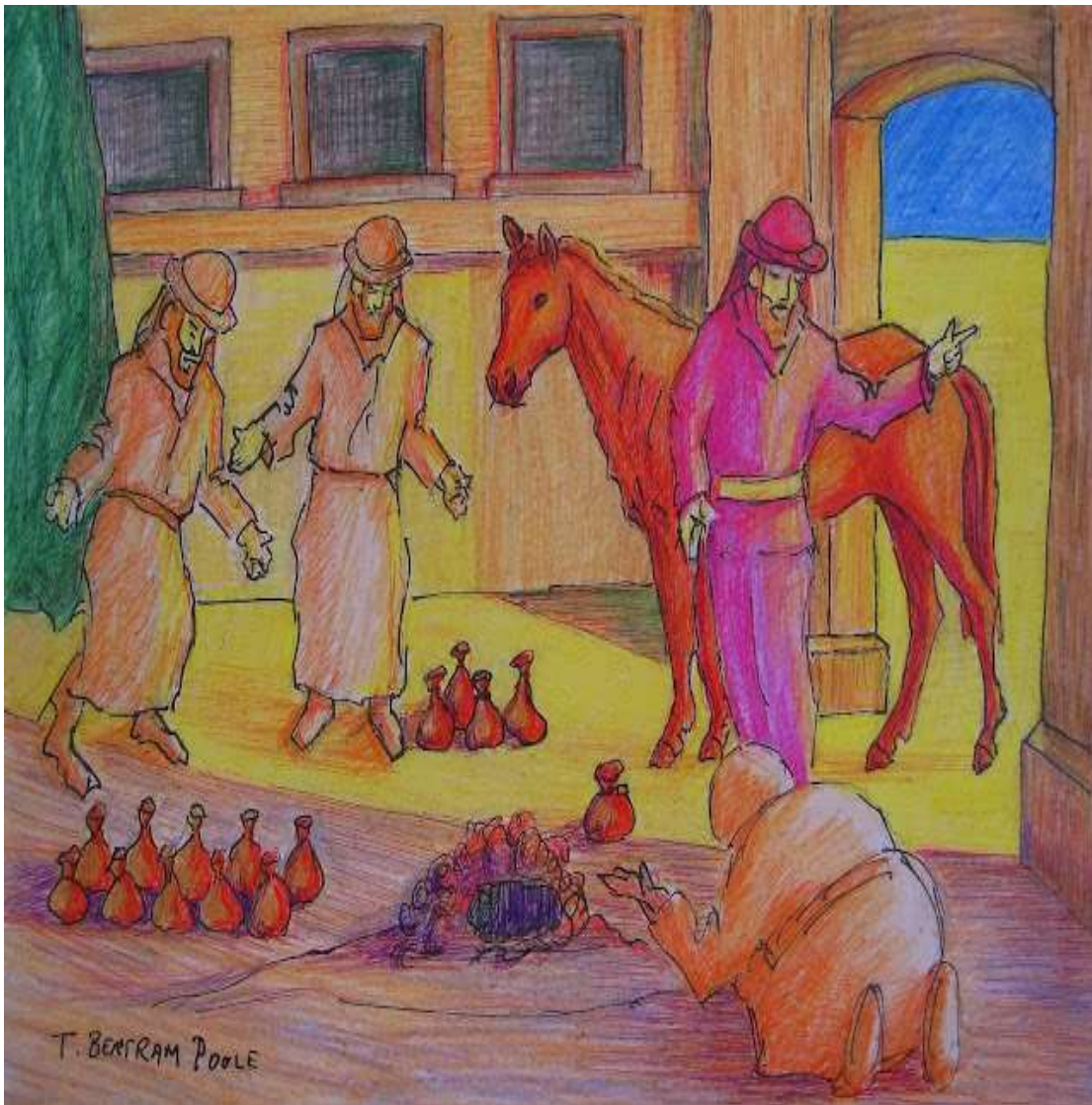
November 19th, 2023

25th Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word



## *The Parable of the Talents*

by T. Bertram Poole – Bertram Poole Art  
ChristianArtNow Blog (posted September 9, 2016)  
<https://christianartnow.blogspot.com/2016/>



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
a just world for all

November 19th, 2023

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

(Pentecost 25/Trinity 24/Ordinary 33-A)

Thanksgiving Sunday

A Service of the Word

**WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY**

**“ Life is God’s Gift to us. What we do with it is our Gift to God.”**

- A. R. Bernard

*\*Please stand as you are able*

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude – Adam Petrosino**

**Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 90)**

One: Holy One, you have been our God from generation to generation. Before the universe exploded and the earth was without form, you have been with us.

**Many: Creator, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: We enter your presence to worship and praise your holy name.

**Many: Mighty One, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.**

One: Teach us to count the days with joy and appreciation for all your marvelous works and steadfast love.

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**\* Invocation**

**Generous God,  
you pour your Spirit into us.  
You bless us with your love.  
In your presence,  
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in time of need  
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We turn toward you now  
seeking to receive your message,  
to give you honor,  
and to commune in your presence.  
Make yourself known  
among us, O God,  
make yourself known to us.  
Amen.

\*Hymn - NCH 422    Come, O Thankful People, Come

## A READING OF THE WORD

### First Reading: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

*The selection of the Hebrew scriptures is from the prophet Zephaniah. Like last week's reading from the prophet Amos, the focus is on the day of YHWH, the day of judgment. Zephaniah was writing during the time of King Josiah, but before he implemented his reforms. For those who are complacent, Zephaniah warns, they will lose everything. They think that God will not allow bad things to happen to them, but they also have not turned back to God's ways. Nothing worldly will be able to save people on the day of YHWH—no money, no power or authority or security measures. The whole earth will be consumed by God's fiery passion. We are reminded that often the use of fire in the Hebrew scriptures refers to purifying, but it doesn't mean a lack of destruction. Everything that is against God's reign will be burned up, and Zephaniah warns that every inhabitant of earth will come to an end. This vision, like the one Amos shared in last week's reading, countered the common view of the prophet's day (and perhaps our own day, in common tropes about the world's end) that only those who are wicked and evil, the enemies of the people, would be destroyed.*

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for the Day of YHWH is near. YHWH has prepared a sacrifice  
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- 12 When that time comes I will search Jerusalem with  
lamps,  
and punish those who are complacent in their sin,  
who say in their hearts,  
"YHWH has no power for good or for evil."
- 13 Their wealth will plundered,  
their households looted. They will build houses and never live in them,  
plant vineyards but never drink their own wine.
- 14 The great Day of YHWH is near  
and coming fast!

How bitter the sound of the Day of YHWH,  
the day of the warrior's war cry!  
15 That day will be a day of wrath,  
a day of distress and agony,  
a day of ruin and of devastation,  
a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of cloud and fog,  
16 a day of trumpet roar and battle cry  
against fortified towns and high corner towers.  
17 I will bring such distress on the people  
that they will grope like those who are blind  
because of their sins against YHWH.  
Their blood will be poured out like dust  
and their flesh like dung;  
18 neither their gold nor their silver  
will save them. On the day of YHWH's wrath,  
in the fire of divine jealousy,  
all the earth will be consumed. For YHWH intends to destroy—  
yes, destroy—  
all who dwell in the land.

**Psalm Response: Psalm 90:1-12 (Responsively)**

*Psalm 90 is a prayer reflecting on God's sovereignty and humanity's fleeting place in the universe. From before anything was created, God existed, and has always been God. Humanity's lifespan is so short, it passes quickly, yet humanity continues to sin and turn away from God. Human life isn't easy—it's mostly hardship—and then we are gone. The psalmist concludes this section with a beautiful statement of treasuring our days, asking God to help us understand how fragile we are, and to count our days in order "that we may gain a wise heart."*

**90** 1 God, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
**2 before the mountains were born,  
you brought forth the earth and the world;  
you are God without beginning or end.**  
3 You turn humankind back into dust  
and say: "Go back, creatures of the earth!"  
**4 For in your sight a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night.**  
5 You sweep us away like a dream,  
fleeting as the grass that springs up in the  
morning—

**6 In the morning it sprouts,  
but by evening it has withered and died.**

7 In the same way, we are consumed—  
terrified by your anger and indignation.

**8 Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets are revealed in the light of your presence.**

9 All our days pass away under your anger,  
and our life is over like a sigh.

**10 The span of our life is but seventy years—  
perhaps eighty if we're strong—  
but the best of them are nothing  
but sorrow and pain;  
they pass swiftly and we are gone.**

11 Who understands the power of your anger?  
We fear the strength of your wrath.

**12 Make us realize how short life is  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.**

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

*The Epistle reading concludes its series with these verses in 1 Thessalonians 5. The apostle Paul encourages the church in Thessalonica to be both patient and vigilant as they wait for Christ's return, which Paul believed would happen in his lifetime. The political climate of the Roman Empire was fairly volatile, with violence from within the emperor's family and the political machinations of those in Rome and in the Greek cities. Paul calls for the faithful to remain alert, especially in times when there seems to be peace, because everything can change quickly. They are to be awake and live not in the shadows but in the daylight, where people will see and know them by their actions and values. Paul believes that on the day of judgment, the faithful will be saved through Jesus Christ, so they need to encourage one another and build up each other in the faith.*

**5** 1 But as to specific times and eras, sisters and brothers, you don't need me to tell you anything—2 you know very well that the Day of God is coming like a thief in the night. 3 Just when people are saying, "At last we have peace and security," then destruction will fall on them with the suddenness of labor pains, and there will be no escape.

4 But you, sisters and brothers, are not in the dark. The Day of God will not catch you like a thief. 5 No, you are all children of light and children of the day. We don't belong to the darkness or the night. 6 So let's not be asleep as others are—let's be awake and sober! 7 Those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk do so at night. 8 But we belong to the day, so let us be sober. Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of salvation.

9 God has destined us not to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that, whether awake or asleep, we might live together with Christ. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you're already doing.

## Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

*Jesus teaches a parable commonly known as the Parable of the Talents in these verses of Matthew 25. In this parable, a landowner went on a journey and summoned workers, entrusting them each with money worth several year's wages. The one who was entrusted with five talents invested them and made five talents more, the one who was entrusted with two talents invested them and made two talents more, but the one who was given one talent dug a hole and hid it. The story tells us that each were entrusted according to their ability. But when the landowner returned, the worker who had hidden the one talent said, "knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter." That worker had the one talent taken from them to be given to the one who made ten talents, and the worker was thrown into the outer darkness. On the surface level of the parable, it may appear to be about faithfulness during a temporary absence. How do we use what God has given us in our lifetime? Are we worried about saving our own lives, or are we participating in the reign of God here and now? One could also say the parable teaches us that if we are not willing to risk, we are bound to lose. But the parable never equates the landowner with God. The parable doesn't even begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." So perhaps we should not assume this is about the kingdom of heaven, but rather, it could be about what happens when you resist worldly power and authorities. It costs to resist. Can you live with integrity when you resist evil? Can you face the judgment of others when you refuse to play by the rules of the world? Others will try to play the game and make more money and move up the ladder of worldly success, but at what cost, when we fail to live into God's ways?*

**25** 14 "Again, it's like a wealthy landowner who was going on a journey and called in three workers, entrusting some funds to them. 15 The first was given five talents, the second two talents, and the third one talent, according to each one's ability. Then the landowner went away. 16 Immediately the worker who received the five talents went and invested it and made another five. 17 In the same way, the worker who received the two talents doubled that figure. 18 But the worker who received the one talent instead went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent

19 "After a long absence, the traveler returned home and settled accounts with them. 20 The one who had received the five talents came forward bringing the additional five, saying, 'You entrusted me with five talents; here are five talents more.'

21 "The landowner said, 'Well done! You are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

22 "The one who had received the two talents then stepped forward with the additional two, saying, 'You entrusted me with two talents; here are two talents more.'

23 "The landowner said to this one, 'Cleverly done! You too are a good and faithful worker. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!'

24 "Finally the one who had received the one talent stepped forward and said to the landowner, 'Knowing your ruthlessness—you who reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter—25 and fearing your wrath, I went off and buried you're the one talent in the ground. Here is your money back.'



26 “The landowner exclaimed, ‘You worthless, lazy lout! So you know that I reap where I don’t sow and gather where I don’t scatter, do you? 27 All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could have had it back with interest! 28 You, there! Take the one talent away from this bum and give it to the one with the ten talents.

29 “‘Those who have will get more until they grow rich, while those who have not will lose even the little they have. 30 Throw this worthless one outside into the darkness, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.’

**Reflection – “Taking the Risk to be Worthless” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein**

### **WE RESPOND**

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

**Creator of the Earth,  
we give You thanks for all that we have.  
We are thankful for the beautiful earth  
You have given us that provides for us.  
We thank you for blue sky and white clouds,  
deep rich earth and clear water.  
We thank you  
for the bold colors of leaves in autumn,  
the night sky in winter dotted with stars.  
We thank you  
for the snow and ice and frost,  
and that it lasts only for its season,  
for in all seasons  
there is great beauty from you.  
We give you thanks and praise  
for the turning of seasons,  
that we can hold on, and let go,  
and see how you are making  
all things new.  
Amen.**

#### **\*Hymn of Response - NCH 421 We Gather Together**

#### **Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings**

God trusts us with the resources necessary for all of us to be well and to have our needs met. The Holy One honors us by inviting us to participate in God’s reign with the generous sharing of gifts. Let us offer our time, talent, and treasure to the kingdom of God.

#### **The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino***

**\*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**

Generous God, we bring the gifts of ourselves and our abundance. Magnify and multiply these offerings to meet the needs before us. Continue to cultivate the spirit of generosity among us and make us good stewards as we allocate the use of these gifts in your name. Amen.

**Choral Hymn- NCH 769 - Hear Our Prayer, O God**

Choir: Keith Konet, Barb Rossington, Bob Bucklew  
Accompanist Adam Petrosino

**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,  
forever.  
Amen.

**\*Thanksgiving Prayer**

God, there are days we do not feel grateful. When we are anxious or angry. When we feel alone. When we see and know injustice. When we do not understand what is happening in the world, or with our neighbors.

We struggle to feel grateful.

But this Thanksgiving, we choose gratitude. We choose to accept life as a gift from you, from the unfolding work of all creation. We choose to be grateful for the earth from which our food comes; for the water that sustains us; and for the air we breathe.

We choose to see our ancestors, those who came before us, and their stories, as a continuing gift of wisdom for us today. We choose to see our families and friends with new eyes, appreciating them for who they are, thankful for our homes whether humble or grand. We will be grateful for our neighbors and strive to love them as we love ourselves. We choose to see the whole planet as our shared commons, the stage of the future of humankind and creation.

God, this Thanksgiving, we do not give thanks. We choose it.

We will make thanks with courageous hearts. When we see your sacred generosity, we become aware that we live in an infinite circle of gratitude. We all are guests at a hospitable table around which gifts are passed and received. We will not let anything opposed to love take over this table. Instead, we choose to open our eyes to see grace and the gifts of life everywhere. In this choosing, we will share gratitude in the world.

Thus, with you, and with all those gathered here, we pledge to make thanks.

We ask you to strengthen us in this resolve. Here, now, and into the future. Around this table. Around the table of our nation. Around the table of the earth. Amen.

## GOING FORTH

**\*Parting Hymn - NCH 418 Nun danket alle Gott (Now Thank We All Our God)**

**\*Commissioning and Benediction**

One: Go with God into the world.

**All: We will journey with our friends and neighbors,  
with our families and strangers.**

One: Go with Jesus to serve faithfully.

**All: We will seek to confront injustice;  
we will bring healing to those who are broken.**

One: Go with the Spirit to share peace.

**All: We will embrace those forgotten by the world;  
we will share our gifts with everyone we meet. Amen.**

**Postlude - Adam Petrosino (please be seated for the Postlude)**

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## Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from *Investment: Service Prayers for the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*, were written by The Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology, United Church of Christ. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023*, written by the Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, posted November 9th, 2023, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lu-tion.org/>
- (3) The Thanksgiving Prayer is adapted from *A Thanksgiving Prayer*, written by Diana Butler Bass, and posted November 26, 2019 on the website, *Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-thanksgiving-prayer/>
- (4) The Commissioning and Benediction is adapted from *Alternate text Liturgy and Communion from November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Pentecost 24/Trinity23/Proper 27/Ordinary 32-A)*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted November 12th, 2023, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*, <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (5) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

**Ministers, All of Us**  
**Scott Rosenstein, Pastor**  
**Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist**  
**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

## Welcome to Adam D. Petrosino, Our New Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at [A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com](mailto:A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com) and by phone at 234.205.9397.

## Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14<sup>th</sup>)/home. The days and hours are:

### Fall Schedule:

Tuesday– 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).



## Today (Nov. 19th) is Thanksgiving Sunday

A **Thanksgiving Sunday Lunch** follows worship today. Our thanks to Robert Bucklew for proposing and coordinating this holiday lunch– and many thanks to those who provided dishes to share! Lunch is provided free to all following worship. Give thanks to God for God's many blessings in your life this year. Please join us!

**Wishing you and your family a very healthy and happy Thanksgiving!**



## Next Sunday (Nov. 26th) is celebrated as Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday

Reign of Christ Sunday brings our season after Pentecost and the church year to a close. Christ is victorious at the cross, defeating death, and calls us into a deeper way of life. With gratitude, we remember all that God has given us, and through Christ we have inherited the dominion of heaven. We prepare to turn to Advent, beginning the liturgical cycle again, as we watch and wait for signs of Christ's return in our world and in our lives in a new way. Reign of Christ Sunday is a reminder that we are always at the

moment of living into Christ's reign now, as we wait for it to manifest. The new church year begins with the First Sunday of Advent (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023).



## Advent Sundays at Zion Church

Sunday, December 3rd, 11:00am – First Sunday of Advent – Holy Communion

Sunday, December 10th, 11:00am – Second Sunday of Advent – Guest Preacher is the Rev. Michael Howard, Faith in Action Minister with the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference (Ohio & northern Kentucky), United Church of Christ

Sunday, December 17th, 11:00 am – Third Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24th, 6:30pm – Fourth Sunday of Advent followed by Christmas Eve Service of Carols & Candlelight

**A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service** will be held on Sunday, December 24th at 6:30pm. We invite you to share the light in a service with beautiful music and a message that reminds us of that night long ago that continues to transform our world and our lives. The Christmas Eve worship service will include carols, a relevant Christmas message and our cherished tradition of passing the candle light and joining in the singing of Silent Night.

You can also join the service via the Zoom platform online at 6:30pm on December 24th.



## 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 The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for 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.
- In early August 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in the U.S. state of Hawai'i. Affecting the island of Maui, and to a lesser extent Hawai'i (also known as the Big Island), the wind-driven fires prompted evacuations, caused widespread damage, and killed at least 96 people in the

town of Lahaina. The proliferation of the wildfires was attributed to dry, gusty conditions created by a strong high-pressure area north of Hawaii and Hurricane Dora to the south. By August 9, the state government of Hawaii issued a state of emergency for the entirety of the state. On August 10, President Biden issued a federal major disaster declaration. The typical area burned by wildfires in Hawaii has increased in recent decades, almost quadrupling. Experts blame the increase on the spread of non-native vegetation and hotter, drier weather.

- Hundreds of wildfires are burning in the Appalachians amid growing drought. Fires have erupted from Virginia to Georgia, including 80 in West Virginia.
- Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group that is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the US and many other powers. Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with hundreds of gunmen infiltrating communities near the Gaza Strip. At least 1,200 Israelis have been killed, while around 250 soldiers and civilians, including women and children, are being held in Gaza as hostages. More than 11,000 Palestinians have also been killed in numerous air strikes on Gaza that Israel's military is carrying out in response, and Israel has imposed a total blockade on the territory, denying it food, fuel, water, and other essentials. In addition to ongoing air strikes Israel has followed up with a ground invasion of Gaza. There is a significant and growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- Two significant earthquakes jolted Nepal on Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, just three days after a powerful temblor killed more than 150 people in the Himalayan nation. A magnitude 5.2 earthquake struck Nepal on Monday, centered in the Jajarkot district about 250 miles northeast of the capital, Kathmandu, which was hit hard by the magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Friday. At least 153 people were killed by that first quake, according to the latest official figures from Nepalese authorities on Monday, which was a slightly lower toll than provided over the weekend. More than 339 people were also injured.
- The people of Lewiston, Maine and surrounding communities following a mass shooting at two locations on October 25<sup>th</sup> that took the lives of 18 people and injured 13 other people.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 603 mass shooting incidents have occurred in the US as of November 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 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 (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
  - Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
  - Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
  - Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
  - Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
  - Keith Konet and family.
  - Marcia Leslie (*friend – health concerns*)
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
  - Patricia Matheny and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*).
  - Our new Music Director, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
  - Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb for recovery of procedure - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert, for tests and procedures*).
  - The family, loved ones, and friends of Henry Senyak.
  - Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
  - Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)

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