

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

March 10th, 2024
Fourth Sunday in Lent
A Service of the Word



Crucifix 1150-1200

The Romanesque crucifix
Made in Castile-Leon Spain
hanging in the Fuentiduena Chapel
in The Cloisters, NYC.



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WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

"Lent stimulates us to let the word of God penetrate our life and in this way to know the fundamental truth:
Who we are, where we come from, where we must go, what path we must take in life."
— Pope Benedict XVI --

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: God's love is for all of creation.

All: The vastness of God is for human, animal, soil, and sun, all together as God's beloved.

One: God has not come into the world in Jesus to condemn us.

All: Jesus has come to live God's love in the flesh.

One: While the world is dim with injustice and the feeling of loneliness,

All: it is in Jesus that the light of love illumines our path of friendship.

**Come, let us join our lives with the Friend,
whose love is for the whole world. Let us worship God!**

***Gathering Prayer**

**O God who is Friend,
the vastness of your love
flows through all of creation,
and this is cause for rejoicing.
For all the harshness
and condemnation
that we see in the world,
you have come to us
out of love, compassion,
and to save us from ourselves.
We acknowledge our belief
that you have come**

to redeem, to heal,
to restore, and forgive,
not just some of the world,
but all of the world.
May our worship embody
the love and light
you bring in Jesus,
in whose name we pray.
Amen.

*Gathering Hymn: NCH 212 - "O Jesus Christ, May Grateful Hymns"

Lenten Candle Liturgy Fourth Sunday in Lent

Meditation

Silent Time

One: As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain caused by the lack of basic needs—lack of food, of shelter, of education, of healthcare, of love.

(A candle is extinguished.)

Hymn: NCH 207 - Just As I Am vv. 1, 2, 3 & 4

1 Just as I am, without one plea
but that your blood was shed for me,
and that you called inviting me,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

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

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

4 Just as I am, your love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be yours, and your alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Lenten Candle Prayer:

One: Let us pray:

Many: Loving God, we thank you that you are with us, and that we may; call upon you no matter where we are, or what we are feeling. Keep us mindful of your presence and trusting in your promise—that you are working with us in the moment-by-moment unfolding of our lives. Amen.

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

The lesson today in the Hebrew Scriptures from Numbers veers from the theme of covenants that we have been following. The lesson is not about a covenant, but that God provides a way to life even when the people disobey God's ways. The people once again are complaining against Moses for bringing them out of Egypt. They complain there is no food or water, except that they "detest this miserable food." They were tired of the manna God provided. So poisonous serpents came and bit the people, and many died. The scripture reads that God sent the serpents, but what if the serpents biting the people were really the people "biting" each other with their complaining and slander? The people came to Moses and confessed their sin, and Moses prayed for the people. God told Moses to make a poisonous serpent and set it on a pole, for everyone who looked at the serpent on the pole would live. Moses did so—he made a serpent of bronze, and everyone who was bit lifted their eyes, and upon looking at the serpent, they lived. Once the people stopped looking at the problems right in front of them and lifted their eyes, they were able to find a way to live together.

21 4 The Israelites traveled from Mount Hor along the road to the Sea of Reeds in order to avoid Edom. But the people grew impatient along the way, 5 and they addressed their concerns to God and Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? We have no bread! We have no water! And we are disgusted with this terrible food!"

6 Then YHWH sent venomous snakes among the people. They fatally bit many of the people. 7 So the people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against YHWH and against you. Intercede for us, and ask that God remove the snakes from us."

So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And YHWH said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it on the end of a pole. Anyone who is bitten and looks at it will live." 9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then whenever the people were bitten by a snake, they looked at the bronze snake and lived.

Psalm Response: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 (Responsively)

Psalm 107 is a song of thanksgiving and remembrance for what God has done for the people throughout time. The psalmist begins by addressing "God's redeemed," which implies those coming out of exile. Verses 17-22 speaks of a time when the people were "so sick, nearly at death's door," and "that food became repugnant," and how God healed and delivered them. This psalm pairs well with the story in Numbers, reflecting that God does not desire punishment, but restoration and healing.

107 1 “Give thanks for God’s goodness;
 God’s love endures forever!”
2 Let these be the words of God’s redeemed,
those redeemed from the oppressor’s clutches,
3 those brought home from foreign lands,
from east and west, from northern lands and
southern seas.

17 Some were fools who suffered because of their
 rebellion,
 because of their own sins,
18 until they were so sick, nearly at death’s door,
that food became repugnant.

19 then they called to God in their trouble
 and God rescued them from their sufferings,
20 sending a word to heal them,
and snatching them from the Pit.

21 Let them thank God for this great love,
 for the marvels done for all people.
22 Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
and recount what God has done in joyful song.

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

In these verses in Ephesians 2, the author (purporting to be Paul) writes about how we live in the world versus God’s intentions for us. We have followed the course of this world which leads to sin and death—worldly measures of success, wealth, notoriety—all those lead to dead ends. None of it will last and all of it leads to supporting systemic sin—oppression, enslavement, cruel workplace practices, racism, marginalization, etc. By grace, however, Christ came for us. By grace we have been saved and shown the immeasurable riches of God. Because of Christ, none of us can boast about what we have or haven’t done. Rather, Christ restores us to God’s intentions, which is for goodness and good works. This was God’s intention from Genesis 1. We have been restored, and God has prepared this to be our way of life.

2 1You were dead because of your sins and offenses, 2 which you committed in your allegiance both to the present age and to the ruler of the power of the air.

—that spirit who is even now at work among “the children of rebellion.” 3 And all of us were among them; we lived at the level of the flesh, following every whim of the flesh, every fancy of this age, and so by nature deserved God’s wrath like the rest.

4 But God, rich in mercy and loving us so much, 5 brought us to life in Christ, even when we were dead in our sins. It is through this grace that we have been saved. 6 God raised us up and, in union

with Christ Jesus, gave us a place in the heavenly realm, 7 to display in ages to come how immense are the resources of God's grace and kindness in Christ Jesus. 8 And it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith—and even that is not of yourselves, but the gift of God. 9 Nor is it a reward for anything that you have done, so nobody can claim the credit. 10 We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to do the good things God created us to do from the beginning.

Gospel Reading: John 3:14-21

These verses in John 3 are the second part of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee who has come to see Jesus by night. Verse 14 begins with using the story of Moses and the serpents in Numbers 21:4-9. The people were saved when they looked to the serpent on the pole, when they looked beyond what they could see in front of them—the poisonous grumblings that had infiltrated the camp—and instead looked to God and God's ways. So the Chosen One must be lifted up, according to John's account, on a cross. As the people in Moses' day were saved from poison when they looked up, those who believe will be saved when they believe in Jesus and will have eternal life. While vs. 16 is one many know by heart, it is just as important to know vs. 17, that God did not send the Only Begotten to condemn the world, but to save the world. The condemnation comes for those who love the ways of the world more than the ways of God, but those who know the truth know the goodness of God's created intention for us, and their works reflect that intention.

- 3** 14 As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,
so the Chosen One must be lifted up,
15 so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One
might have eternal life.
16 Yes, God so loved the world
as to give the Only Begotten One,
that whoever believes may not die,
but have eternal life
17 God sent the Only Begotten into the world
not to condemn the world,
but that through the Only Begotten
the world might be saved.
18 Whoever believes in the Only Begotten avoids
judgment,
but whoever doesn't believe is judged already
for not believing in the name
of the Only Begotten of God.
19 On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light came into the world,
people showed they preferred darkness to the light
because their deeds were evil.
20 Indeed, people who do wrong hate the light and
avoid it,
for fear their actions will be exposed;

21 but people who live by the truth
come out into the light,
so that it may be plainly seen
that what they do is done in God."

Choir Hymn: NCH 211 – Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days

Author: Claudia F. I. Hernaman, 1873; alt.
Tune: ST. FLAVIAN C.M.
Source: Day's The Whole Booke of Psalms, 1562
Choir: Bob Bucklew, Keith Konet, & Barbara Rossington
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino

Reflection – “What Happened at the Cross?” - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

***Prayer of Response**

Sojourning God, as we move through the halfway point of Lent, journeying toward the cross at Calvary, we remember where we have gone astray on our own journey of faith.

At times we have taken you for granted. We have taken the church for granted. We have assured ourselves that we are good people, and that we do good things.

Remind us that the journey is as important as the destination. We are called to help others in this world, not only to know you, but to know your love through our love of them. Call us to truly love our neighbor, in which we take notice of their needs, understand the systems and structures in place that continue to oppress and harm, and work for justice in this world.

For it is this life that matters. It is in this life that we measure ourselves, whether we have lived into your ways. It is in this life that we have the opportunity to practice hospitality, welcome the stranger, lift up those who are poor, work for justice, and pursue peace.

In the name of Christ, who journeys with us, we pray. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: “Remember God Is Gracious”**

(Sung to the tune of NCH 386 – “The Church's One Foundation”)

“Remember God Is Gracious”

Author: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2018.

The Presbyterian Outlook magazine commissioned this hymn

Tune: AURELIA 7.6.7.6..D.

Composer: Samuel S. Wesley, 1864

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**1 Remember God is gracious, and know what God has done!
God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son.
Now all those who believe him, who trust in Jesus Christ,**

Can know they will not perish; they'll have eternal life.

**2 God did not send us Jesus in judgment — to condemn;
God sent him as a promise, so we'd be saved through him.
Our Savior came to free us — not just for heaven's joy
But here, where so much need is, where sin seeks to destroy.**

**3 Your love, Lord, leads us outward to love the world you freed —
To care for your creation, to help all those in need;
We welcome in the stranger for we were strangers, too.
O God, we pray for courage to love the world with you.**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Today we rejoice in a God who comes to redeem the world through a pouring out of Divine Love. Our rejoicing is offered with the generosity of our energy, our spiritual gifts, and our treasure. We are invited as God's beloved children to express our rejoicing this day through the giving of our gifts in love. May it be so.

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**

Thank you, God, for loving us to the very ends of the earth and back. Your willingness to say yes to coming in the flesh to redeem our world through love and no to the powers of oppression has led us to give of ourselves generously this day. Take these gifts and multiply them across this world that you love so extravagantly. Amen.

Prayer 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.

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn NCH 191 - "Before Your Cross, O Jesus"**

(NOTE: "Before Your Cross, O Jesus," by Ferdinand Q. Blanchard, was written in 1929 for Euclid Avenue Congregational Church in Cleveland, where Blanchard served for 40 years. Blanchard was active in missions and a leading advocate of educational opportunities for African-Americans. Tragically, Euclid Avenue Congregational Church burned to the ground from a lightning strike in March, 2010, but the congregation lives on as South Euclid United Church of Christ, currently led by Senior Pastor and Teacher, the Rev. Courtney Clayton Jenkins.)

***Commissioning**

One: As you leave this place,
remember you are God's community in the world:

All: for God's love endures forever!

One: As you leave this place,
remember you are alive with Christ:

**All: for Christ's light shines
in the deepest shadows!**

One: As you leave this place,
remember the gifts God offers to you:

**All: for the Spirit fills us with good works to do,
and glad songs to sing to the world!**

***Benediction**

Go, dear ones, in the hope of the one who does not condemn, but brings life, light, and compassion to all. Step into this world in the assurance that God's love is enough for our lives. In fact, it is more than enough. In the name of the Friend, the Companion, and the Comforter, go forth in peace. Amen.

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

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Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, the Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *No Condemnation: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday in Lent Year B*, written by The Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott, Conference Minister in the Indiana-Kentucky Conference. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Lenten Candle Liturgy is adapted from *Lenten Candle Liturgy - Fourth Sunday in Lent*, posted May 27, 2015, on the blog *Process & Faith*. <https://processandfaith.org/lenten-candle-liturgy>
- (3) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for March 10th, 2024, 4th Sunday of Lent*, written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted February 28th, 2024, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lution.org/>.
- (4) The **Commissioning** is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for March 10th, 2024, The Fourth Sunday in Lent-B*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted March 4th, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
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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!

Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont is committed to reaching out to all people with the saving "Good News" of God's Love. To do this, we strive to attain a covenant relationship with people of all races, colors, ethnic origins, ages, sexual orientations and gender identity. We are also committed to grace-filled inclusivity in our worship, programs, membership, mission and social activities.

We very strongly believe in outreach and community involvement, as well as ecumenical spiritual involvement within the surrounding community. We are committed to listening to history while joining with the future.

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

Adam D. Petrosino, Our 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. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and your musical gifts with us. Adam can be reached by e-mail at 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. 14th)/home. The days and hours are:

Winter Schedule:

Tuesday– 9am – 1pm

Wednesday – 10am-2 pm

Thursday – 9am – 1pm

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



Rest and Resilience Following the Way of Jesus through Lent

A daily devotional spanning Ash Wednesday through Easter guides readers through Lent with weekly themes of retreat, prayer, honest, compassion, creativity, and community

When Jesus was preparing for a new phase of his ministry — or experiencing the final week — he went to Bethany, his holy retreat. Following that tradition, The Bethany Fellowships, a ministry of support for young clergy and congregations, have cultivated an intentional rhythm of life and ministry that empowers community, creativity, prayer, and resilience. This six-week-long Lenten daily devotional follows practices and relationships Jesus models for us throughout his ministry, bringing us to the biblical town of Bethany to encourage retreat, prayer, honesty, compassion, creativity, and community. The diverse contributor based is comprised of ordained ministers in a variety of denominations and ministry settings, many of whom are in their first few years of congregational leadership.

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OWLS Cleveland (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

Cordially invites you to our March meeting. We will gather on **Wednesday, March 13th, 2024, 11:30AM – 1:30PM** at **Zion United Church of Christ, 2700 W. 14th Street, Cleveland** (on the campus of San Sofia Apartments).

nb

Join us for lunch and meet our guest speaker, **Michael O'Malley, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor**. Then join in an art project with **local Tremont artist, Angelica Pozo**. Get acquainted with your neighbors, find out who the OWLS are, and hear about future activities. Door prizes and favors.



To help us make sure we are prepared, **please RSVP for the lunch and/or the art project by today - March 10, 2024**. Let Beverly know – or call Beverly to RSVP: 216.310.6810.

Masks optional.

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 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 – and for an end to violence and bloodshed particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Israel and Gaza.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 70 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of Marh 6th..

Mass shooting incidents in the past 10 years in the US:

2023 – 656 (*While mass shooting incidents increased slightly since 2022, 2023 has shown an 8-10% overall DECREASE in deaths and injuries from gun violence. Some cities saw 20%+ decreases.*)

2022 - 646

2021 - 689

2020 - 610

2019 - 414

2018 - 335

2017 - 247

2016 - 383

2015 - 332

2014 - 272

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 their comfort, for safety, for health, and for wholeness.
- The residents and management of the San Sofia Apartments who share a campus with us.
- Those anticipating surgery, recovering from surgery, or undergoing medical procedures, tests, or treatments.
- Those living in assisted living or in a nursing home
- Those who are homebound and those who are caregivers
- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.
- Those on our church prayer list:
 - Patti Augustine and family including Noah, Kate, Lucy, and Max along with Patti's brother

Dave).

- Robert O Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing in Senior Living. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
- The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
- Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob*)
- Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, and Nancy Moore's neighbor - also Ivory, Ken's downstairs neighbor.
- Maddie (the young daughter of Scott's friend) prayers for her, her parents, Rachel and Ron, and her younger brother.
- Keith Konet and family (including granddaughter, Jocelyn Paulette, and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui - and for Keith's brother -in-law Bob Naugle.
- The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
- Patricia Matheny Kellogg and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*). Also Patricia's friend, Sue Renovitz.
- Our Music Director & Pianist, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
- Our Pastor Scott Rosenstein
- Barbara Rossington and Barb's cousin, Robert
- Debbie Webb
- Beverly Wurm and family