

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."

That's the message for this frightening time in our world.

'Peace be with you.'

-Fernando Sabino

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

**All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

“In the end, everything will be all right. If it’s not all right, it’s not the end.”
That’s the message for this frightening time in our world.
‘Peace be with you.’”
-Fernando Sabino

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Peace be with you.”

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Here are the marks on my body.”

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ’s peace is with us. We don’t need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

**Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation
and in the goodness of those who love us.**

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

**Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace
and in the laughter of little children.**

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

**Many: We will touch the broken places with healing,
we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.**

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

**Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with
the world! Amen!**

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

**Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation
and in the goodness of those who love us.**

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

**Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace
and in the laughter of little children.**

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

**Many: We will touch the broken places with healing,
we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.**

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

**Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with
the world! Amen!**

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

**All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

**Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation
and in the goodness of those who love us.**

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

**Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace
and in the laughter of little children.**

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

**Many: We will touch the broken places with healing,
we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.**

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

**Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with
the world! Amen!**

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

“In the end, everything will be all right. If it’s not all right, it’s not the end.”
That’s the message for this frightening time in our world.
‘Peace be with you.’”
-Fernando Sabino

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Peace be with you.”

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Here are the marks on my body.”

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ’s peace is with us. We don’t need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

**All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

**All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

**Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation
and in the goodness of those who love us.**

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

**Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace
and in the laughter of little children.**

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

**Many: We will touch the broken places with healing,
we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.**

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

**Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with
the world! Amen!**

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

“In the end, everything will be all right. If it’s not all right, it’s not the end.”
That’s the message for this frightening time in our world.
‘Peace be with you.’”
-Fernando Sabino

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Peace be with you.”

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Here are the marks on my body.”

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ’s peace is with us. We don’t need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

**Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation
and in the goodness of those who love us.**

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

**Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace
and in the laughter of little children.**

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

**Many: We will touch the broken places with healing,
we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.**

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

**Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with
the world! Amen!**

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

“In the end, everything will be all right. If it’s not all right, it’s not the end.”
That’s the message for this frightening time in our world.
‘Peace be with you.’”
-Fernando Sabino

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Peace be with you.”

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Here are the marks on my body.”

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ’s peace is with us. We don’t need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

“In the end, everything will be all right. If it’s not all right, it’s not the end.”
That’s the message for this frightening time in our world.
‘Peace be with you.’”
-Fernando Sabino

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Peace be with you.”

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, “Here are the marks on my body.”

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ’s peace is with us. We don’t need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

**All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

**Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.**

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

April 7th, 2024

Second Sunday of Easter

A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024



The Doubt of St. Thomas

By He Qi, China/USA

Global Christian Worship

<https://globalworship.tumblr.com/search/Doubting+Thomas>



April 7th, 2024
Second Sunday of Easter
A Service of the Word & Holy Communion
and the Day before the Total Solar Eclipse 2024

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**"In the end, everything will be all right. If it's not all right, it's not the end."
That's the message for this frightening time in our world.
'Peace be with you.'
-Fernando Sabino**

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship**

One: As we join in worship this day, we might feel like the disciples, overwhelmed by grief. After all, the state of the world is so uncertain now.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Peace be with you."

One: We might feel like Thomas, looking for physical signs that the unbelievable could be true. After all, nothing like this has ever happened before.

Many: But our resurrected Christ comes to us, saying, "Here are the marks on my body."

One: Can we really believe that Jesus is here again?

Many: Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on us. Christ's peace is with us. We don't need to be afraid.

One: Our resurrected Christ calls us to worship, and we receive the peace of Christ.

Many: Let us worship with joy! Alleluia!

***Gathering Prayer**

**Resurrected Christ,
you have taught us
how the unbelievable
can be possible.
When there is so much
to fear in the world,
we can find peace
in your presence.
As we worship,**

breathe your Spirit
on us,
that we may
carry it with us.
Help us comfort
our neighbors.
Help us serve
a world of need.
We pray this
with thanksgiving
for your work
among us.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn: NCH 240 - "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading Acts 4:32-35

During the season of Easter, the Revised Common Lectionary uses selections from the Acts of the Apostles instead of the Hebrew Scripture reading. The early church, in the days after Pentecost, came together through the Holy Spirit and shared all that they had. Reflecting Acts 2:42-47, the early believers brought everything they had to hold in common, not claiming private ownership of anything. No one went hungry or in need because everyone cared for each other. This sense of communal responsibility, however, was short-lived. In the following chapter, two early leaders held back some of their property and lied about it, and Paul wrote to the church in Corinth because of the abuses at the Lord's table, where some feasted and some went hungry. Nonetheless, in this season of Easter, we cling to the hope of new life now, and that we always have the opportunity to live into the reign of God here on earth.

4 32 The community of believers was of one mind and one heart. None of them claimed anything as their own; rather, everything was held in common. 33 The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and they were all given great respect; 34 nor was anyone in need among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them 35 and give the money to the apostles. It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

***Psalm Response: Psalm 133 (Responsively)**

Psalm 133 is a brief psalm, perhaps shared at a wedding: a blessing when family comes together and lives in harmony. It is like an anointing from God, the way the priest Aaron was anointed with oil, or the way God refreshes the hillsides with dew. When family joins together and lives in unity, it is a blessing ordained by God.

133 1 See how good, how pleasant it is
for God's people to live together as one!

**2 It is like precious oil on Aaron's head
running down on his beard,
running down to the collar of his robes.**

3 It is like the dew of Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
**For that is where God bestows the blessing—
life that never ends.**

Second Reading: 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

The letter of 1 John begins with the writer's intentions: to testify to the life revealed in Jesus Christ. From the same community as the author of John's gospel account, the writer uses the same imagery as John's gospel in identifying Jesus and God with light. The writer addresses their audience by beginning with confession: we cannot be in community with one another when we participate in sin. If we say we are without sin, we are deceiving ourselves. Instead, if we come before Christ and confess our sins, we will receive forgiveness. For Jesus came as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and we have an advocate in Christ and in God our heavenly parent.

1 1 THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING,
which we have heard,
and seen with our eyes,
and have looked at
and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is Life—
this is the subject of our letter.
2 That life came to be;
we saw it and bear witness to it.
We proclaim to you the eternal life
which was with Abba God
and was manifested to us.
3 What we have seen and heard
we declare to you,
so that you may be one with us—
as we are one with Abba God
and with the Only Begotten, Jesus Christ.
4 We write this to fulfill our joy.
5 This, then, is the message we heard from Jesus
and declare to you:
God is light,
and in God there is no darkness at all.
6 If we say we have intimacy with God
while still living in darkness,
we are liars

and do not live in truth.
7 But if we live in the light,
as God is in the light,
we are one with each other,
and the blood of Jesus, the Only Begotten,
purifies us from all sin.
8 If we say we are without sin,
we lie, and the truth is not in us.
9 But if we admit our sins,
God, the faithful and just One,
will forgive our sins
and cleanse us from all injustice.
10 If we say we have not sinned,
we call God a liar
and show that God's Word is not in us.

2 1 My little ones,
I am writing this to keep you from sin.
But if anyone should sin,
we have an Advocate with God—
Jesus Christ, who is just.
2 Jesus is the full payment for our sins,
and not for our sins only,
but for those of the whole world.

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31

John's account of the resurrection continues in these verses of chapter 20. On the evening of the same day that the tomb was found empty, the disciples had gathered together in fear of some of the religious leaders (we must be careful to read and interpret John's account, knowing that the disciples, Jesus, and the writer of John were all Jewish as well). Jesus appeared before them, the first appearance to the disciples after the resurrection besides Mary—except Thomas wasn't with them. It's important to follow Thomas' story. Back in chapter 11, he is ready to go to Jerusalem to die with Jesus. However, by chapter 14, Thomas is unsure of what Jesus is saying. When Jesus tells them they know the way, Thomas argues they do not know the way. Jesus then tells them that he is the way, the truth, and the life. Thomas started off as a strong, faithful disciple, but grew uncertain and questioned what Jesus said. And it's only after a second appearance that Thomas believes. Jesus then declares that those who have not seen but have come to believe are blessed—an indication to the reader/listener who has not seen the risen Christ that it is more blessed to believe without seeing.

20 19 In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 Having said this, the savior showed them the marks of crucifixion.

The disciples were filled with joy when they saw Jesus, 21 who said to them again, "Peace be

with you. As Abba God sent me, so I'm sending you." 22 After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven.
If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

24 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas—nicknamed Didymus, or "Twin"—was absent when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples kept telling him, "We've seen Jesus!" Thomas' answer was, "I'll never believe it without putting my finger in the nail marks and my hand into the spear wound."

26 On the eighth day, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them, saying, "Peace be with you."

27 Then, to Thomas, Jesus said, "Take your finger and examine my hands. Put your hand into my side. Don't persist in your unbelief but believe!"

28 Thomas said in response,
"My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus then said, "You've become a believer because you saw me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus performed many other signs as well—signs not recorded here—in the presence of the disciples. 31 But these have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Only Begotten, so that by believing you may have life in Jesus' Name.

Reflection - Struggle is Central to Post-Easter Life - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*** Prayer of Response**

Risen Christ, you live again with your scars. Risen Christ, You come before us with the words, "Peace be with you." Risen Christ, you embody healing and hope. You accept us with our wounds from the world, our scars that still haven't healed quite right, our questions and our doubts. Risen Christ, you call us to follow. Help us to accept the invitation: help us to accept that we don't have to be perfect, that we will never have it all straightened out, that we will always be a bit of a mess, and that you love us exactly as we are. Risen Christ, lead us on. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 254 - "These Things Did Thomas Count"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Jesus has empowered us with the Holy Spirit. We have life because of his presence with us. Let us join in God's abundance, giving what we can to offer peace to a hurting world.

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**

God of the Resurrection, help us use these gifts to offer hope where there is sorrow, peace where there is chaos and love where there is fear. We can do incredible things because your Spirit lives within us. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

How often have we heard the good news of forgiveness and restoration? Yet, we are still reluctant to believe. God offers us new life, yet we are afraid to let go of the old. Let us confess our doubts and fears to the One who waits to make us whole.

***Prayer for Forgiveness**

We use a lot of words, Gracious God, but do little to turn them into deeds. Instead of being of one heart and soul, we choose sides and form groups of folks just like us. Blessed with great grace, we have trouble sharing it with those who need it the most.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, as we step out of our shadows into your light. Restore us, as we reveal our brokenness. Hear us, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

-Silent Prayer-

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: This is the good news we have to declare: God leads us out of the shadows to walk in the light of Christ.

All: This is the word we have heard: our faithful God forgives our sins and raises us to new life.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 241 - "Joy Dawned Again on Easter Day"

*Text: Latin, c. 5th century
Transl. John Mason Neale, 1851; alt.
Tune: PUER NOBIS NASCITUR L.M.
German carol, 15th century
Adapt. Michael Praetorius, 1609
Harm. George R. Woodward, 1910
Choir: Barbra Rossington, Keith Konet, and Bob Bucklew
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

COMMUNION LITURGY
A CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to Communion:

We remind one another:
Jesus welcomes everyone at this table.
No one is turned away.
If you seek God's presence, come and eat.
If you are hungry for this spiritual food, come and eat.
If you have questions and doubts, come and eat.
If you feel unworthy, come and eat.
This table is spread for all of us
that we each might experience
God's abundant and unconditional love.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: May the Risen Lord be with you!

Unison: And also with you!

Leader: Lift your hearts to God, Resurrection People.

Unison: We lift our glad hearts to the One who gives us new life.

Leader: Children of God, sing with joy on this day of resurrection.

Unison: Songs of joy flow from our very being on this day.

Allow silence to speak for a few moments

Leader:

How good and pleasant
it was, Joyous God,
when creation sprang forth:
great power flinging stars
into the blue-black skies;
precious goodness dripping down
the mountains into the valleys.
We were created in your image,
your breath filling us with your Spirit,
but in the evening on that day,
we followed sin and death
on the journey away from your grace.
Your prophets came with great grace,
declaring what they heard and saw,
but we remained determined in our rebellion.
Though the doors of our hearts

were locked for fear you would condemn us,
Jesus came into our midst,
with words of peace on his lips.

So, with those from every time and every place,
with whom we hold faith in common,
we offer your praises forever:

Unison:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of grace and hope.
All creation praises your glorious name.
Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the One who comes that our joy may be complete.
Hosanna in the highest!**

Leader: As we gather to bear witness to Christ's life and death,
as we celebrate his resurrection and new hope,
we declare that mystery we have heard and seen:

**Unison: Christ went to the cross, stretching out his hands to embrace death;
Christ was brought out of the grave, reaching out his hands to embrace your love;
Christ will come, offering us his hands so we might go home with him.**

Table Prayer

**Breathe on us, Spirit of God,
as we gather around your table.
Transform this simple bread
into that gift of life which, broken,
can make us whole once again.
Sanctify this common cup
that it might become the grace
for which we thirst in this and every moment.
And when we have been nourished,
may we go forth into the world,
pushing aside the doors locked tight
by the forces of prejudice and oppression,
that all might receive your hope,
that everyone might feel your Breath
bringing them back to life.**

**And when we have come to the end of our journey,
when we gather with our sisters and brothers
around that feast of wonder and grace you prepare,
we will join our hearts and voices in singing
your praises throughout all eternity,**

**God in Community, Holy in One,
hear us as we pray as Jesus taught us, saying,**

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.**

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Leader: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:
"This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

And pouring the wine, Jesus said:
"This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me"

Call to the Feast

Leader:
This is the feast prepared for you.
Come and share for all is ready.

***Sharing of the Elements**

Leader:
Let us receive the gift of God, the Bread of Heaven

Unison:
We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

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

Unison:

We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

***Blessing**

May the most precious body and blood
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
keep and preserve you
unto life everlasting and eternal.
May you go in peace
and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!
Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion**

**Generous God,
at this table
we have tasted
your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat
are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf
to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus,
the Bread of life.
Amen.**

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 377 - "Forward Through the Ages"**

***Solar Eclipse Meditation - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...**

On Monday, April 8, 2024 some of our churches will be able to witness a total solar eclipse. The moon travels along its orbit, passing between the sun and the earth. For three to four minutes the day will become as twilight. It is a holy moment, affording us a new perspective on God's creation.

One: Creator God, you bring life to this earth and beyond.

Many: All of creation is infused with your spirit.

One: We praise your creation!

Many: We marvel at the vastness of your realm!

One: We are humbled as we witness the spectacle of your design.

Many: We pause to consider our own unique part in your universe.

One: You created each of us to be an important contribution to your vast cosmos.

Many: And each of our actions participates in the health of your creation.

One: We stand in awe before this display.

Many: We unite in praise of your loving hand, guiding the moon around the earth.

One: As day is seemingly brought to night

Many: we are reminded of your power to transform and heal.

One: As the moon travels before our eyes

Many: We wonder: You, who can move an object a third of the size of the earth, can you move our own fears, our limitations, our wars from night to day?

One: Today, bring us to a deeper understanding of your power.

Many: Today, unite us as one human family, committing to work together toward the peace and wholeness of your creation.

All: May your *shalom* travel throughout the universe. Amen.

***Commissioning**

One: Go now to walk in God's light.

Many: We will tell of what we have seen in the glory of creation and in the goodness of those who love us.

One: Go now to serve in Christ's light.

Many: We will share what we have heard in the parables about grace and in the laughter of little children.

One: Go now to live in the Spirit's light.

Many: We will touch the broken places with healing, we will stare down injustice until it changes its ways.

***Benediction**

One: Beloved, go in peace, and go be peace!

Many: Let us receive the Holy Spirit deep in our being, and let us share our new life in Christ with the world! Amen!

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

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Gathering Prayer, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Peace Be With You: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter*, written by Rev. Jacob Nault, Pastor of Union-Congregational Church in Waupun, WI. He also works alongside the UCC's Disabilities Ministries Board to provide music, liturgy, and other resources on issues of disability justice. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Worship Resources for April 7th, 2024, Second Sunday of Easter* written by the Rev Mindi Welton-Thomas, and posted March 28th, 2024, on her blog , *Rev-o-lution*. <http://rev-o-lition.org/>.
- (3) Call to Reconciliation, Prayer of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, Table Prayer, and Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion for April 7th, 2024, Easter 2-B* written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted April 1st, 2024, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. [http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion Sunday](http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/palm/passion%20Sunday).
- (4) The Unison Invitation for Communion is adapted from *Communion Liturgy for Epiphany: Cinnamon Stars*, by the Rev Amy Pitton 2016 posted on *Worship Well*, a ministry of the Vermont Conference United Church of Christ [https:// worshipwell. Church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/](https://worshipwell.church/2016/01/21/communion-liturgy-for-epiphany/)
- (5) Portions of the Communion Liturgy - Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine and Call to the Feast - are adapted from *Liturgy w/communion for December 5, 2021 (Advent 2 - C)*, written by The Rev. Thom Shuman, and posted December 1, 2021, on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (6) A portion of the Communion Liturgy - the Sharing of the Elements - is adapted from *Online Communion for Palm Sunday*, written by The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi. ©2020 Maren Tirabassi, all publishing rights reserved. Permission for congregations to use in worship or educational settings, including streaming.
- (7) The Blessing and Prayer of Thanksgiving Following Communion is adapted from *Blessing and Prayer After Communion – in the Service of Holy Communion, February 25th, 2024* at the Faith Lutheran Church, Bellingham, WA. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AqN080lhpe7i82u3X9uNo_fr17j9YRiB/view
- (8) The Solar Eclipse Meditation was written by Rev. Dr. Janet Ross, Pastor of Wakeman Congregational Church, Wakeman, Ohio, and posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/solar-eclipse-meditation/>. Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (7) 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!

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)

OWLS CLEVELAND (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors)

Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, 11:30am - 1:30pm
at Zion United Church of Christ - 2700 W. 14th Street.

We will Welcome Spring with speakers covering Trees, Plants, and Container Gardening. We will plant herbs, have door prizes and favors.

RSVP 216-310-6810 to be included in the free lunch. Hope to see you there.



To Patti Augustine and the family of Deborah Shields – With Deepest Sympathy:

Patti and Family, the members and friends of Zion United Church of Christ, Cleveland offer our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to you following the death of your loved one and family member, Deborah. We are so sorry for your loss. In this difficult and challenging time, please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers – and that we keep you close to our hearts.

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.
- The people of Haiti.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 120 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of April 4th

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 doing well after another procedure).
 - 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 and Heather diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

- 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

Total Solar Eclipse – Monday, April 8, 2024

On Monday, April 8, 2024, Cleveland will be in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse crossing North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A total solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the Sun. The sky will darken as if it were dawn or dusk.

It’s a rare event. The last time there was a total solar eclipse in Ohio was in 1806. And while there will be another total eclipse in the U.S. on Aug. 23, 2044, you’ll have to travel to see it because there won’t be another one visible in Cleveland and NE Ohio until 2444.

2024 Total Solar Eclipse Timeline in Cleveland

Eclipse starts: 1:59 p.m. EDT
 Totality begins: 3:13 p.m. EDT
 Maximum totality: 3:15 p.m. EDT
 Totality ends: 3:17 p.m. EDT
 Eclipse ends: 4:28 p.m. EDT

Safe Viewing Only look at the eclipse through a special-purpose solar filter. Safe eclipse glasses should comply with ISO 12312-2 international standard. Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark ones, are unsafe. For more on safe viewing: https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohio.org/uploads/pdfs/solar_eclipse_safety_tips_one_pager.pdf. Cleveland Public Libraries are giving the glasses away free (limit 5 per person) – while supplies last.

Recycle your eclipse glasses!

The Cuyahoga County Department of Sustainability will offer receptacles in some county buildings to collect used eclipse glasses. The glasses can be reused in other locations experiencing a future solar eclipse. The recycling program is through a partnership between Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District and Astronomers Without Borders.

Eclipse glasses can also be recycled at Cleveland Public Libraries.

Places to Watch the Eclipse:

- **You don’t have to go anywhere to experience the eclipse. You just need an unobstructed view of the southern sky.**
- **You can also see the eclipse from our parks: Lincoln Park, Towpath Trail, Abbey Playground, Cleveland Sign on Abbey, Clark Field, Four Freedoms Park (intersection of Tremont, College, and**

W. 10th St.)

- The city of Cleveland has 21 recreation centers and will open up 17 locations to get in on the fun without costing you a dime. Watch parties at all rec centers are free and include a limited amount of eclipse glasses.

The rec centers open during the eclipse include:

- **Michael Zone**
- Lonnie Burten
- Collinwood
- **Cudell**
- Frederick Douglas
- **Estabrook**
- Fairfax
- Gunning
- Halloran
- Hamilton
- Glenville
- Kovacic
- Thurgood Marshall
- Zelma George
- Woodland
- Stella Walsh
- Earle B. Turner

PLEASE NOTE: Waste Collection will be delayed throughout the City of Cleveland by one day the week of April 8th, 2024

An Eclipse Is Evidence of Things Unseen

Astronomy teaches us to see the light in the world's darkness.
LUKE LEISMAN | APRIL 4, 2024

Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/eclipse-is-evidence-of-things-unseen.html>



Image: Illustration by Christianity Today / Source Images: Wikimedia Commons / Unsplash

At the climax of the crucifixion story, darkness comes over the land. Jesus, crowned with thorns, cries out. The earth quakes; the temple curtain is ripped in two. God's moment of greatest love seems like defeat: a fissure between heaven and earth. But, the Gospels hold, this isn't the end of the story. The darkness ends, and Sunday morning comes. The stone in front of the grave is rolled away. "Do not be afraid," an angel declares. "He has risen."

I've often wished I had been there to see this cosmic event with my own eyes. To witness it. To know beyond a shadow of a doubt this was the Son of God. Alas, I wasn't. I've seen no visible stone rolled back nor angelic appearances to light my shadowy doubts or fill those tenacious cracks of spiritual night.

But I have seen a total solar eclipse.

I witnessed the eclipse in 2017, camping in the Smoky Mountains. It's easy to describe the events leading up to it: the eight-hour drive, the worry about clouds, the marshmallows, mosquitos, and building excitement. But how to describe when the moment hit?

Here are some words I wrote down: *wind, cold, 360-degree sunset, crickets, stars, the end of the world.*

You see it coming. There's a shadow, a hundred miles wide, racing toward you, faster than thought. And then it hits. In my memory, it's like plunging under water. The sound all changes, with a swoosh, like in movies. And the light—it's not water you're swimming in. It's liquid metal. Everything silver, platinum, bizarre. The sun is gone, replaced by an ink-black pupil surrounded with a wild white iris of solar atmosphere.

"Or a morsel of bone," writes author Annie Dillard in her essay "Total Eclipse." "I pray you will never see anything more awful in the sky."

Awful in all the senses of the word. In Scripture, when people encounter angels, they respond with terror and worship. A total solar eclipse is the same. Indeed, I've read that in the year 840, Emperor Louis of Bavaria saw the world plunged into eclipse for five long minutes and died of fright. In Syria, one of the earlier records of an eclipse, about 1223 before Christ, is accompanied by a note. It says, "Two livers were examined: danger."

To experience a total eclipse is to cry out, to feel the earth shake, to feel a fissure between heaven and earth. But also to be full of awe.

In 1806, a condemned criminal, brought from his dungeon to witness the eclipse, raised his manacled arms to the sky.

"There seems an instinctive sense ... akin to awe ... whispering to our spirits," wrote James Fenimore Cooper in reaction to that same eclipse. "Never have I beheld any spectacle which so plainly manifested the majesty of the Creator, or so forcibly taught the lesson of humility to man."

My memory struggles to hold the totality of it all. I know my mouth hung open, overcome. And then the sun comes back again. A sunrise in midday. The great stone in the sky rolled away, and light returned.

Some might object that any parallels between the events of Easter and the events of an eclipse go too far. What mystery is there in something I can explain to children with a bright flashlight and supplies from Walmart?

A quarter-inch ball of Play-Doh can, when aligned just right, represent the moon and cast a small shadow over a one-inch marshmallow earth about 30 inches away. Even if you want to get into the complicated orbital mechanics that make predicting eclipses a graduate-level mathematics exercise, we understand how the moon's orbit is tipped, like a gyrating hula hoop, relative to the earth's. We can calculate the sun's small tugs that make that hoop precess like a top, compute its rocking like a child's circus mobile.

Nothing particularly extraordinary: just a 2,200-mile-wide rock blocking some light. No mystery here: just an 80-million-trillion-ton orb of iron and silicon swinging between us and our life-giving star at 2,300 miles per hour.

I am reminded of Moses, when he climbed Mount Sinai to learn God's laws and asked to see God's glory. God allowed Moses to glimpse just his back as he passed by—face in full eclipse. When Moses returned, the Scriptures say, his face was radiant from even this obscured glance.

Eclipses have no practical benefit. They have nothing to add to crop production or most modern scientific studies. They seem to be a chance alignment, a coincidence of a moon 400 times smaller and also 400 times closer than our sun. In fact, in a few hundred million years, the moon will have receded far enough from the earth that total solar eclipses will no longer happen.

And yet, for now, every couple of years (for a narrow strip at least somewhere on the earth), they do. In my years as an astronomer, the more I learn of this delicate dance, with its precessing nodes and pirouetting axes, the more, I realize, my face begins to glow.

“God laughs and plays,” David James Duncan wrote. And Carl Sagan, for all his agnosticism, was right when he said, “We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.”

Still, I approach with caution. The number one rule of solar-eclipse watching is to not look directly at the sun. Except during those few moments of complete totality, you need to use specially designed eclipse glasses that block 99.99 percent of the light or use the reflected light of a pinhole camera, which effectively does the same.

There’s a similar theological truth. On that mountain God hid Moses in the crevice of a rock and covered him with his hand until he’d passed by. And me—where does God place me that I might glimpse his glory, except perhaps in the crevice of long shadows, like those cast by a rugged wooden cross?

“Every object near a star wears a cone of night,” writes astronomer Chet Raymo. “Near every star there is a ring of cone-shaped shadows that point into space like a crown of thorns. ... Every particle of dust in the space of the solar system casts its own tiny pyramid of darkness.”

On a chalkboard I can draw lines and circles showing how the moon, earth, and planets carve narrow cone-shaped shadows in the sun’s light, 100 times taller than they are wide. How the part of the earth and the moon facing the sun are experiencing daytime, and as the earth spins into its pyramid of shadow, we experience night.

Night is a thorn we cannot escape; only from space can we see its sharpness.

In college I spent a significant amount of time pondering the problem of pain. I dove into apologetic, intellectual solutions, like the need for choice or freedom or contrast to bring out joy. Good in a classroom but weak in the face of real, lived pain. Why can a good God allow for all the suffering, all the evil that blankets this world? I still have no answers.

But I do have eclipses.

An eclipse is a reminder that shadows have tips and that night exists only in the narrow shafts of shadow. When we experience a total solar eclipse, we experience the very peak of the moon’s night, stroking the earth with the lightest brush of an ink-dipped feather. Blink and it’s done. But it’s enough to remind us of this gift: In space, night has edges. We live not in a universe of darkness but in a universe awash in light.

As Raymo adds, “Earth’s cone of night is the Paraclete that brings the gift of deep space and deep time.”

I do not know why, if God is loving, he tolerates evil. But I do know that, astronomically speaking, it takes night—real material darkness—to see. Without the narrow cracks of night in the sun’s encompassing light, we’d know nothing of distant galaxies, of forming stars. Earth and heaven are connected through the narrow night.

Job, brave enough to confront God in his pain, receives what I’ve long considered a not-so-comforting reply: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? ... What is the way to the abode of light?” And yet, my friend Anna pointed out to me, Job responds with favor. God gave Job, apparently, exactly the answer he needed.

And I’ve been given an eclipse, a sliver of night, a fissure through which the universe shines. In the dark, in the tip of the moon’s shadow, I behold an abundance of mathematics, motion, and awe. The light of the world descends to darkness but then comes again—a hint of resurrection light.

Luke Leisman is a research professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and blogs about astronomy in everyday life at Substack - <https://lukeleisman.substack.com/>