

Mt. Zion United Church of Christ
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Rev. Amy E. Northridge, Pastor
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March 15, 2026

9:45 AM

Fourth Sunday in Lent
On the Way: Wandering Hearts and Shared Valleys
Wandering Heart: I'm Fixed Upon It¹

Thank you for worshipping with us today. If you are a guest, we invite you to take a moment to complete a visitor's card located in the back of the pew in front of you and place it in the offering plate when it is passed. We also invite you to sign your name in our guest book located in the back entrance of the sanctuary.

We welcome infants and children and all their wiggles & voices in our worship! We have children's books and activity bags for them to enjoy in the side narthex! Additionally, after the children's message, children from 3 years old—6th grade are invited to participate in Sunday school in our classroom downstairs. They can choose to attend Sunday school or return to their seats to sit with their parents. Please see a member of the welcoming team for assistance!

WORDS OF WELCOME

SPECIAL OFFERING VIDEO

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

LENTEN POEM²

Open Hands

by Rev. Sarah Speed

PRELUDE

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

by Watts

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: On our worst days,

C: God is good.

L: On our best days,

C: God is good.

L: When life is consistent,

C: God is good.

L: And when life turns on its head,

C: God is good.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

L: Day and night, Monday through Sunday,

C: God is good. God is here. God is love.

L: Hold tight to that good news. Let us worship God!

L: I invite you to stand as comfortable as we join in song to praise our God.

***OPENING HYMN** (see below)

Be Thou My Vision

Be Thou My Vision

Mary E. Byrne, 1905

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Piano $\text{♩} = 80$

The musical score is written for piano on a single staff in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The score consists of four systems of music, each with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are arranged in four columns corresponding to the four verses. The first system covers measures 1-4, the second system covers measures 5-8, the third system covers measures 9-12, and the fourth system covers measures 13-15. The piece ends with a double bar line at the end of the fourth system.

1. Be Thou my vi - sion O Lord of my heart.
2. Be Thou my wis - dom and Thou my True Word.
3. Rich - es I heed not, nor vain em - pty praise,
4. Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,

5
Naught be all else to me save that Thou art. Thou my best
I ev - er with Thee and Thou with me Lord. Thou my soul's
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways: thou, and thou
may I reach heav - en's joy, O heav - en's Sun! Heart of my

10
thought by day and by night. Wa - king or sleep - ing Thy
shel - ter thou my high tower, raise me Thou heav'n ward, O
on - ly, first in my heart, great God of heav - en, my
own heart, what - ev - er be - fall, still be my vi - sion, O

15
pres - ence my light.
Pow'r of my Pow'r.
treas - ure thou art.
Ru - ler of all.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

L: There's a moment in our scripture today when Jesus turns to Peter, named "the rock" of the church, and says, "Get behind me, Satan!"

I don't know about you all, but that's a pretty bad day for Peter. It's a pretty bad day when Jesus calls you Satan!

Fortunately, this absurd moment comforts me with the knowledge that even Peter made mistakes. Peter, who was given the keys to Heaven. Peter, Jesus' right-hand man, made mistakes just like me. And still, Jesus chose him.

Knowing that, let us speak honestly with God. For even on our worst days, we belong to God, and that will never change. Join me in prayer—

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Holy God,

C: We often find ourselves moving through a world that does not make sense. Like Peter, we want to yell out, "This should not happen!" We want to control scenarios beyond our reach. We want to hold your world in our hands. Forgive us for the moments when we lead with declarations instead of curiosity. Forgive us for arguing when we could listen. Forgive us for fixating on one truth, when we could open ourselves up to many. Soften our hard edges and teach us how to listen. With hope in our hearts we pray, amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

L: Friends, no matter how many times you have dug your heels in, no matter how many fights you have wanted to pick with God, no matter how many times you have disagreed, raged, or clung to what you know instead of embracing holy change—we worship a God of grace.

Nothing can separate us from God's love, not even a stubborn attitude or a tense heart. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel: God's love for us will always be deeper than we can imagine. We are seen. We are loved. And we are forgiven. Now follow Peter, and go be the Church in the world. Amen.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

HYMN OF TURNING NO. 459 (black hymnal, v. 3) *Come, O Fount of Every Blessing*

ALL SING: O to grace how great a debtor daily I am drawn anew! Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to you. Prone to wander, I can feel it, wander from the love I've known: Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for your very own.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Passport Question: *When do I want things to go my way—and what happens when they don't?*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

L: Before we hear God's Word for us this day, let us join in prayer to truly hear what God has to say to us this day,

L: Listening God,

C: If we could attach ourselves to you, we would. We would scribble your scripture onto our tender hearts. We would weave your good news into the fiber of our being. We would bind ourselves to you, but instead, we wander. Instead of attaching ourselves to you, we find ourselves swept up in the business of the day. Like a seesaw of faithfulness, we move back and forth, up and down, constantly trying to find you in the midst of it all. So speak clearly to us now. Quiet the distractions long enough for us to affix ourselves to your good news. We are listening. We are hungry. We are hopeful. Amen

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16:21-23 (CEB)

SERMON

Passport Question: *What am I clinging to that might be keeping me from seeing the bigger picture?*

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

P: I invite you to stand as comfortable to profess our faith.

C: I believe in a God of second chances, a God who sees through my stubbornness and holds my fear with tenderness.

I believe that this God of second chances, uses ordinary people like Peter to do good in the world. Therefore, I believe and hope that God can use me too.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

I believe that from time to time, God invites us to imagine the impossible.
 I believe that from time to time, God invites us to change our minds. This change is holy and important work, although challenging.

When fear and scarcity plague me, or when the impossible feels out of reach, I believe that God meets me with grace and invites me to follow. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

Here at the Peak

The Way

RATHBUN 8.7.8.7

Words by Anna Strickland, 2023

Music by Ithamar Conkey, 1851

Faith - ful - ly I learned to fol - low
 Life was ea - sy, faith was sta - ble
 Thread by thread my faith un - rav - eled
 Though the way leads through steep can - yons

4
 Step by step and not to stray
 Then the path - way climbed up - hill
 When the way be - came un - known
 I sur - ren - der my con - trol

7
 March - ing on with proud bra - va - do
 Life got hard - er past the cra - dle
 So - lid ground gave way to gra - vel
 Christ is still my sure com - pan - ion

10
 Claim - ing Je - sus as the way
 Je - sus Christ I fol - lowed still
 So I cling to Christ a - lone
 As the path be - fore un - folds

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*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

ALL: 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 sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

WORSHIP CHOIR ANTHEM

By Faith

by Berry

TIME FOR SHARING

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY & DISCIPLESHIP

OFFERTORY

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

by Clephane

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

L: Generous God,

C: you correct our stubborn hearts and help us wander back to you. Bless these gifts we offer today. Use them to seek the lost, to feed the hungry, to bring hope to deep waters, and to remind the world that your love never stops pursuing us. With gratitude we give and receive. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN NO. 195 NCH** (black hymnal, see next page)

The Old Rugged Cross

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

The Old Rugged Cross

George Bennard, 1913

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Piano $\text{♩} = 80$

1. On a hill far a - way stood an old rugged cross, the
2. O that old rugged cross, so de - spised by the world, has a
3. In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so di - vine, a
4. To the old rugged cross I will ev - er be true, its

4
em - blem of suf - fering and shame; and I love that old cross where the
won - drous at - trac - tion for me; for the dear Lamb of God left his
won - drous beau - ty I see, for 'twas on that old cross Je - sus
shame and re - proach glad - ly bear; then he'll call me someday to my

7
dear - est and best for a world of lost sin - ners was slain. So I'll
glo - ry a - bove to bear it to dark Cal - va - ry.
suffered and died, to par - don and sanc - ti - fy me.
home far a - way, where his glo - ry for - ev - er I'll share.

10
cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I'll lay down; I will

14
cling to the old rugged cross and ex - change it some - day for a crown.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

***BENEDICTION**

P: Beloved wanderer, as you leave this place, may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve. May you look for God in every face. May you find the courage to get out of the boat, to run to the tomb, and to speak of your faith. And when the world falls apart, may you hear God's voice deep within, saying, "Take heart, it is I, be not afraid." You are called. You are blessed. In both your ups and your downs, you always belong to God. Go now in peace. Go trusting that good news.

Amen.

POSTLUDE

In Christ Alone

by Townend & Getty

¹The Liturgy is written by and adapted from the writings of Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org."

²Poem by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Thank you to the worship choir for enhancing the worship service with their talents this morning!

Welcome Team Members— Deb & Terry Barnes, Nancy Sleeper

Lay Preacher—Michael Maletz

Liturgist— Tama Allison

Poem Reader—Charles Hull

Tech Team— George DeMers, Jack Herlocker, John Kollasch

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.