

Mt. Zion United Church of Christ
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Rev. Amy E. Northridge, Pastor
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March 22, 2026

9:45 AM

Fifth Sunday in Lent
On the Way: Wandering Hearts and Shared Valleys
Wandering Heart: Teach Me¹

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

JOYS AND CONCERNS

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

LENTEN POEM²

Teach Me

by Rev. Sarah Speed

PRELUDE

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

arr. Labenske

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Why are you here?

C: I am seeking God with my whole heart, with my entire mind, with a fire burning in my bones.

L: I see it! You're in the right place!

C: This is God's house. The door is open to you. Why are you here?

L: I am seeking God with my whole heart, with my entire mind, with a fire burning in my bones.

C: We see that in you! You're in the right place. This is God's house. The door is open to you.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

L: Let us worship God.

C: Let us learn from the Spirit. Amen!

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

***OPENING HYMN NCH NO. 388** (black hymnal, see below)

Help Us Accept Each Other

Help Us Accept Each Other

Samuel J. Stone, 1866

Samuel S. Wesley, 1864

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$\text{♩} = 80$

Piano



1. Help us accept each oth - er as Christ ac - cept - ed us; teach
2. Teach us, O God, your les - sons, as in our dai - ly life we
3. Let your ac - cept - ance change us, so that we may be moved in
4. God, for today's en - coun - ters with all who are in need, who

6



us as sister broth - er, each per - son to em - brace. Be present, God, a -
struggle to be hu - man and search for hope and faith. Teach us to care for
liv - ing sit - u - a - tions to do the truth in love; to practice your ac -
hun - ger for ac - ceptance, for righteousness and bread, Bring us new eyes for

11



- mong us, and bring us to be - lieve, we are our - selves ac - cept - ed and
peo - ple, for all, not just for some, to love them as we find them, or
- ceptance, un - til we know by heart the ta - ble of for - give - ness and
see - ing, new hands for hold - ing on; re - new us with your Spir - it; God!

16



meant to love and live.
as they may be - come.
laughter's heal - ing art.
Free us, make us one!

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

L: Friends, when you study Peter's story in scripture it's almost impossible to ignore how much he loved to ask questions. He asks Jesus:

"What does the parable mean?"

"Where are you going?"

"How many times should we forgive?"

Like a tenacious toddler, Peter was full of questions, because Peter was eager to learn. I wish I was more like that. I still have so much to learn.

So, friends, let's be like Peter. Let's return to Christ with the humility of a student as we pray together the prayer of confession. Let this be a moment of learning. Let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Holy God,

C: We long to be lifelong learners. We long to approach you with curiosity and an open mind. Instead, we often live as if we know best. We forget that the disciples called you "Rabbi, Teacher." Forgive us for the times when we fail to be curious. Forgive us for the times when we assume we know best. Forgive us for the moments when we imagine that our learning is done and that we have all the answers. Like Peter—who was brave enough to ask, "How many times should we forgive?"—make us brave. Spark a desire in us to learn, and may our curiosity carry our faith into deeper waters. With hope and humility we pray, amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

P: Family of faith, When Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I forgive?" Jesus responded with abundance. That abundance exists for you as well.

No matter what you have done or left undone, no matter what lessons you have learned or are still learning, God's abundant grace exists for you. God's love will never run out.

So hear and rest in this good news: You are forgiven. You are loved. You are invited to serve. Thanks be to God! 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: *Who do I need to forgive or ask forgiveness from?*

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: Teaching God,

C: We want to learn your ways. We want to learn the ways of forgiveness. We want to learn the ways of grace. We want to learn your ways of love. That is part of why we return to your text week after week, because we are hungry to be more like you. So as we prepare to listen to your good Word, calm the noise in our minds. Center our spirits to focus on you so that we might learn and hear what we have missed in this story before. God, we want to learn your ways. Meet us here. Speak your truth. Help us listen. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 18:15-22 (CEB)

SERMON

Passport Question: *Where do I long for clarity or easy answers—And can I make space for the infinite colors of grace instead?*

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

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

C: We believe that questions are a building block of faith.

“How many times should I forgive?”

“Jesus, where are you going?”

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

We believe that humble curiosity can open our eyes.

“Where does it hurt?”

“What do you need?”

“How can I help?”

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

We believe that God is a teacher.

“Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.”

“Here I am.”

“Send me.”

We believe that faith invites our whole being to engage, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

Love Your Neighbor and Forgive

Love Your Neighbor and Forgive

REDHEAD NO. 76 (7.7.7.7.7.7)

Words by Anna Strickland, 2023

Music by Richard Redhead, 1853



"Love your neigh - bor and for - give" Words so sim - ple
Sounds of bombs and bul - lets ring War is all we've
Love is ris - ky, peace is faint And for-give - ness



yet so hard We have wounds be - cause we've lived
ev - er known Pac - i - fists are framed as weak
feels na - ive All are sin - ners, all are saints



Cal - lus - es en - fold our hearts Jes - us reach - es
We re - ly on might a - lone Jes - us paves the
And we all God's grace re - ceive So we fol - low



out to touch Wounds and hearts that hold too much
paths of peace Ev - en as the threats in - crease
mer - cy's way Soft - en - ing our hearts to grace

*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

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

TIME FOR SHARING

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY & DISCIPLESHIP

OFFERTORY

There is a Balm in Gilead

arr. Labenske

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

L: Generous God,

C: you break open our wandering hearts and teach us that all deserve your grace. 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. 190 NCH (black hymnal, see next page)

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Frederick C. Maker, 1881

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$\text{♩} = 80$

Piano

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of six systems of music, each with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The score begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 80. The lyrics are: 1. Beneath the cross of Jesus I; 2. Upon the cross of Jesus with-; 3. I take, O cross, your shad-ow for glad-ly take my stand, the shad-ow of a -in my mind I see; the ver-y dy-ing my a-bid-ing place; I ask no oth-er might-y rock with-in a wea-ry land; A form of One who suf-fered there for me; And sun-shine than the sun-shine of Christ's face; Con-home with-in the wil-der-ness, a rest up-on the from my griev-ing heart with tears two won-ders I con-tent to let the world go by, to know no gain or way, from the burn-ing of the noon-tide heat, and the -fess, the won-ders of Christ's glo-rious love and loss, my sin-ful self my on-ly shame, my bur-den of the day. my un-worth-i-ness. glo-ry all the cross.

1. Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I
2. Up - on the cross of Je - sus with -
3. I take, O cross, your shad - ow for

4
glad - ly take my stand, the shad - ow of a
- in my mind I see; the ver - y dy - ing
my a - bid - ing place; I ask no oth - er

7
might - y rock with - in a wea - ry land; A
form of One who suf - fered there for me; And
sun - shine than the sun - shine of Christ's face; Con -

10
home with - in the wil - der - ness, a rest up - on the
from my griev - ing heart with tears two won - ders I con -
- tent to let the world go by, to know no gain or

13
way, from the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat, and the
- fess, the won - ders of Christ's glo - rious love and
loss, my sin - ful self my on - ly shame, my

16
bur - den of the day.
my un - worth - i - ness.
glo - ry all the cross.

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.

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

Great is Thy Faithfulness

arr. Wyrzten

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, Vanessa Bicher, Tori Everhart

Liturgist— Brenda Beyer

Poem Reader—Carol Hartman

Tech Team— Elaine Bevivino, Jack Herlocker, & Ron Miles

*Those for whom it is comfortable, please rise.