

Living Table United Church of Christ

March 3, 2024, Third Sunday in Lent

From Fear to Hope

Singing: "Loosen"

Loosen, loosen, baby
You don't have to carry
The weight of the world in your muscles and bones
Let go, let go, let go (x3)

Greeting and Grounding (words by Aly Halpert)

Singing: "Loosen"

Holy breath, and holy name
Will you ease, will you ease this pain (x3)

Invoking Spirit Responsively

One: Are we awake, alert, aware?

All: Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

One: Are we paying attention; are we seeking God's activity in the world?

All: Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

One: Do we recognize opportunities for ministry and engage with those who are vulnerable around us?

All: Christ is coming into our lives in a new way.

One: Come, let us worship and be renewed for our work in the reign of God.

All: Christ has extended the invitation: let us work together in the reign of God here and now.

Singing: "Loosen, Loosen"

A: Loosen, loosen, baby

You don't have to carry
The weight of the world in your muscles and bones
Let go, let go, let go

B: Holy breath, and holy name
Will you ease, will you ease this pain (x3)

Acknowledging our Need for God (I'm going to do
an interactive thing here)

Sharing Love's Peace

Singing: "You are the Face of God"

You are the face of God.
I hold you in my heart.
You are a part of me.
You are the face of God.

Learning with Young (and Old) Disciples

Considering the Word and the Sacred Texts

Now Testament: "Justice" by Rachael Keefe

A Chinese friend frequently hears "Go back where you came from!"

She is hurt more than she lets on but pretends to be numb.
How can hatred be based only on what we see?
Lord, have mercy.

An African neighbor has hateful words sprayed on his house
just because he wants to live in peace with his spouse.
When ugliness and fear step in where grace ought to be,
Christ, have mercy.

Young ones kill themselves when the bullies go unchecked
because no one can see the life that hateful words have wrecked.
How can we not learn this lesson when it's shown so painfully?

Lord, have mercy.

Homeless women, men, and children hide in the shadows
we walk in a hurry—compassion is something fear overshadows.
For all the times we cannot tolerate, “This could be me,”
Christ, have mercy.

Muslims are suspect even when they are life-long citizens
of a country founded on religious freedom and welcome of others.
Is it impossible for us to accept someone who worships
differently?
Lord, have mercy.

Black men and women crowd our jails with frustrated rage
as our laws uphold racism and so few recognize this outrage,
while others spew such hatred and violence freely and publicly.
Christ, have mercy.

Women are paid less and targeted more for perceived weakness
and, for some, abuse is still inflicted when there is a lack of
meekness.
Why are laws so slow in changing what should not be?
Lord, have mercy.

The elderly are victimized by scammers who readily take what is
not theirs
and it's a shame when this happens with no one around who
cares
enough to help and protect ones so vulnerable who deserve
safety.
Christ, have mercy.

Gay men are beaten on the streets of cities known for their
acceptance—
headlines and news stories report witnesses and their helpless
tolerance.
For all the moments of learned helplessness and studious apathy,
Lord, have mercy.

Bigger walls and more border protections to keep illegals out
when all they want is a chance at a better life and, without a
doubt,
they would find it here if there were such a thing as legal
hospitality.
Christ, have mercy.

Surely the day is coming when fear, violence, hatred, and greed
will cease and loving kindness is the response to all human need.
Are we not called by God to rejoice and live peaceably?
Lord, let us be your mercy.

Sacred Readings: Amos Chapter 5, adapted by Ann
King

*Message: "From Fear to Hope: Moving from
Invalidation to Inclusion" Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe*

Singing: "Let Justice Roll Like a River"

Refrain: Let justice roll like a river, and wash all oppression away;
Come, O God, and take us, move and shake us,
Come now, and make us anew, that we might live justly like you.

1. Take from me your holy feasts, all your offerings and your
music;
Let justice flow like waters, and integrity like an ever-flowing
stream.

Refrain

2. How long shall we wait, O God, for the day of your mercy to
dawn,
The day we beat our swords into ploughs, when your peace reigns
over the earth?

Refrain

3. Hear this, all of you who use the poor in your thirst for power and riches:

Our God will turn your laughter to tears, on the wondrous Day of our God.

Refrain

4. Even now return to me, let your hearts be broken and humble, For I am gracious, generous and kind; come and seek the mercies of God.

Refrain

5. You have been told the way of life, the way of justice and peace;

To act justly, to love gently, and walk humbly with God.

Refrain

Praying Together

Prayers of Concerns and Joys

For the world... For the country... For the wider community... For our selves...

After each spoken prayer, please respond by saying and gesturing:

We release this prayer to You, Holy One.

Prayer of Jesus translated by Neil Douglas-Klotz

Source of Sound: in the roar and the whisper,
in the breeze and the whirlwind, we
hear your Name.

Your name, your sound can move us
if we tune our hearts as instruments
for its tone.

Create your reign of unity now--
through our fiery hearts
and willing hands.

As we find your love in ours,

let heaven and nature form
a new creation.
Grant what we need each day in bread and insight.
Forgive our hidden past, the secret shames,
as we consistently forgive
what others hide.
Deceived neither by the outer
nor the inner--free us to
follow your way with joy.
From you is born all ruling will,
the power and life to do, the song that beautifies all--
from age to age it renews.
Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Gathering At Love's Table

Invitation

One: God is with you!

All: And God is with us all.

One: Open wide your hearts.

All: We open them completely to the Spirit of God.

One: May God's love nurture our wandering spirits each day.

All: May God's light sustain our souls each night.

Singing: "Do It Afraid"

Sometimes, we just do it afraid
When the fear won't go away
Then we just do it anyway
Sometimes, when the fear's still there
Then we offer up a prayer
For a way to be brave
And just do it afraid, do it afraid
Do it afraid, do it afraid

The Great Thanksgiving

One: This is a season of wilderness-

All: The season we seek to understand the Divine just a little more.

One: This is the time for us to reach inward to find the self we hide, even though we cannot hide from God.

All: This is the chance for us to also turn our attention outward, caring for the Christ in our midst.

One: The Lenten roads are long

All: Yet full of gifts.

One: The Lenten paths often seem chilly

All: Yet warm with the winds of the Spirit.

One: The Spirit of God is the light that guides us in times of fear and days of hope.

All: The Christ is our companion on the journey when we are lost in the depths of fear and when we have hold of hope.

One: We remember Jesus' time in the wilderness...take and drink and always remember me.

Blessing and Sharing the Feast

All: May the Spirit who traveled with Christ in the wilderness and fills us with grace surround these elements. May the Spirit draw us near in this season of wilderness, become our strength on this journey, and fill our lives with hope. Amen.

Singing: "Give Us Bread for the Journey"

Give us bread for the journey, give us bread.

Give us bread for the journey, give us bread.

When our legs are getting heavy and we're hanging down our heads,

give us bread for the journey, give us bread.

Communing Together

Singing: "Give Us Bread for the Journey"

Make us one with each other, make us one.

Make us one with each other, make us one.

All the walls we've built around us, may we learn to tear them down.

Make us one with each other, make us one.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: Holy One, receive our gratitude for this time at your table. We are strengthened and encouraged for the journey ahead. With your grace, our fears will be transformed into hope. We thank you for the Love that fills us and makes it possible to move from the falseness of our fears to the new life your hope gives us. In gratitude we will carry your grace and mercy out into the world. Amen.

Announcements

Singing: "Act Justly, Love Mercy, Go Humbly"

1. It all comes down to this,
What you require of me:
Love my neighbor as myself,
And You above all things.

Refrain: Act justly, love mercy, go humbly
With You, God.
In all things, in all ways,
Go humbly with You, God

2. It all comes down to this,
To be Your hands and feet,
Good news to all the world,
The truth will set us free.

Refrain

Bridge: It's beauty for ashes,
It's mourning to dancing.
It's closer and closer,
The glory of heaven.

It's beauty for ashes,
It's mourning to dancing.
It's closer and closer,
The glory of heaven.

3. And years from now we'll see
The fruit our hands have sown
Faith just like a seed,
The only way it grows.

Refrain

Benediction

Resources Used

Invoking: rev-o-lution, adapted

Communion Liturgy: michelletorigian.com, adapted