

# Living Table United Church of Christ

*March 10, 2024, Fourth 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: When we are lost in the wilderness,

**All: God's steadfast love endures forever.**

One: When we complain about our problems,

**All: God's steadfast love endures forever.**

One: When we ignore abundant provisions,

**All: God's steadfast love endures forever.**

One: When we wander aimlessly,

**All: God's steadfast love endures forever.**

One: When our words and actions are guided by our fears,

**All: God's steadfast love endures forever.**

One: In this time of worship, may we have the courage to release  
our failures and rest in God's love.

**All: May we renew our trust in God's steadfast love.**

## **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**

All: Holy God, Creator of all that is, hear our prayer.  
There are chasms in our lives, deep valleys that separate us from one another and from you. We confess that we have allowed those rifts to grow, for fear of admitting our part in the separation, for fear of being rejected when we reach out.  
You call us to a reconciled life, to healed relationships, to a wholeness with each other and with you. Call us once more to the way of wholeness, healing and reconciliation, and grant us the grace and courage to follow.

*silent reflection*

One: Friends, receive the good news: we are loved, we are forgiven and we are invited into new life.

**All: Through God's grace we are set free to go out into the world and be the loving, gracious, hopeful people of God!  
Amen!**

## **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: "In Spite of the Gremlin" by Ann King

When I found myself alone in a double bed,  
the little gremlin on my shoulder  
became bolder, spoke more sternly,  
whispering messages I learned in child and teenage days,  
insisting there were proper ways  
in which I should behave.  
The foremost rule was not to let the neighbors  
know that anything was different, wrong.  
"When the neighbors see you mow the grass,  
they'll see he's gone. They'll know."  
(All my childhood, the mythical "neighbors" must never know.)  
The gremlin whispered more:  
"How can you be a family  
when you are three instead of four?"  
Will your kids be OK with only you?  
Do you know what a single parent should do?  
You thought you'd be a wife  
all your life. What are you now?  
And how do you fit in?  
Your friends are married, and you're alone."  
The gremlin liked the word "alone."  
It liked to repeat  
all the "truths" of my growing-up years  
and stoke my fears of the life I now owned  
Weeks passed, and I kept the neighbors  
as ignorant as possible,  
but was always in doubt of what they'd found out,  
and what they thought.  
And it they cared if I was paired  
or not.

I prayed to God for guidance---sometimes.  
Prayer wasn't my habit then.  
Mostly I asked the universe  
to lead me to a better place.  
(Maybe they're the same,  
just by a different name.)  
Then, little by little, over the days  
I found ways to talk back to the gremlin

and tell some new truths I'd discovered.  
Most importantly, a family  
is whatever you make it to be.  
My girls and I were never wrong  
to call ourselves one;  
we were just as fine as any other.  
And I could be a single mother.  
(I'd had some practice all along.)  
I sought out single people  
who'd been through this transition too,  
and we were strong and competent and cool.  
So I stopped feeling like a fool  
and told that gremlin it better quit.  
Or, better yet,  
give me the messages I wanted to get:  
tell me I'd get through it,  
that I was smart and I could do it.  
I took the reins of this new life  
and made decisions that helped me grow.  
After a while, I became aware  
that the pesky gremlin was no longer there.  
My life was improving,  
and I was glad to know  
that, with help from friends and God---and maybe the universe,  
I was the one who'd made it so.

Sacred Readings: Amos Chapter 6, adapted by  
Lauren Siegel

*Message: "From Fear to Hope: Moving from  
Uncertainty to Trust" Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe*

**Singing: "I Trust in God"**

I'm thankful! So grateful! I am one in the Spirit all around me.  
I'm thankful! So grateful! I trust in God.

**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: "Sacred Love"**

You are Sacred Love  
Sacred Love  
Is all that You are  
You are Sacred Love, God  
Sacred Love  
Is all that You are (repeat)

*Refrain:* Show the way, God, show the way  
I want to live in such a state of grace  
Lead the way, God, lead the way  
I want to live in such a holy place  
Such a holy place

You are Blessed Peace  
Blessed Peace  
Is all that You are  
You are Blessed Peace, God  
Blessed Peace  
Is all that You are  
*Refrain*

You are Deepest Joy  
Deepest Joy  
Is all that You are  
You are Deepest Joy, God



Deepest Joy  
Is all that You are  
*Refrain x2*

You are Sacred Love  
Sacred Love  
Is all that You are  
You are Sacred Love, God  
Sacred Love  
Is all that You are  
Sacred Love  
Is all that You are

## **Benediction**

### *Resources Used*

Invoking: [spaciousfaith.com](http://spaciousfaith.com), adapted

Acknowledging our Need: [holdfasttowhatisgood.com](http://holdfasttowhatisgood.com)

Communion Liturgy: [michelleorigian.com](http://michelleorigian.com), adapted