

# Lakewood Congregational Church

*A Congregation of the United Church of Christ*

Sunday, October 18, 2020



An Order of Worship to be followed in your home, along with our  
worship video on your own  
Preferably at 10:00am

## **Welcome and Announcements**

Welcome to worship on this Sunday.

We are glad you're worshipping with us today. Welcome to our Virtch service today!

Blessings at Beck event at the Beck Center from 11-12 today for holy communion, music, and a canned food drive. Hope you will join us there!

At Lakewood Congregational Church, we strive to be people of extravagant welcome. Whether you are young or old, gay or straight, single or partnered, happy or sad, confused or inspired, street smart or college-educated, whether you can't pay your bills or you have more than enough to share—no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here in this place, to worship the God who welcomes us all.

When you begin your in-home worship service, pause to center yourself and then hold your palms towards the computer screen or to your heart and imagine the energy of connection. Think of many of the people you love at Lakewood Congregational Church and the Body of Christ throughout the world and feel the ways in which our hearts are connected to yours.

Say, "May the Peace of Christ be with you"

## Offering and Contribution Collection

Please consider fulfilling your pledges during this time. Financial gifts are always welcome, and our church feels the call to respond to the needs around us as they arise. Financial stability allows us to do so more effectively. So, let us give generously of our time, talent, treasure to further the work of God in our community. You can do so in the following ways:

- Writing and mailing a check to Lakewood Congregational Church, 1375 W. Clifton Blvd., Lakewood, OH 44107
- Texting STEWARD to 44-321
- Sending a gift through your bank's online bill pay
- By using the donate button on the church's website [www.lcc-church.org](http://www.lcc-church.org)
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options



*The flowers on the altar  
are dedicated to the Glory of God  
in celebration of 25 years of marriage  
for Muriel and Tom Campbell.*

## Prelude

*My Shepherd Will Supply My Need*

by Isaac Watts, arr. John Carter

Ben Malkevitch, piano

## Call to Worship

One: Each morning, God's grace awakens us,  
each evening, God's peace cradles us.

All: **Compassion is our constant companion,  
as we go through work, school, the day.**

One: In every moment, God is present with us;  
God whispers words which can change our lives.

All: **Justice is our faithful teacher,  
pointing to where we can carry out fairness.**

One: When we find ourselves groping in the shadows,  
God's light will provide a way home.

All: **We turn the corner, and hope is waiting for us;  
we return home, and find a feast prepared.**

## Invocation

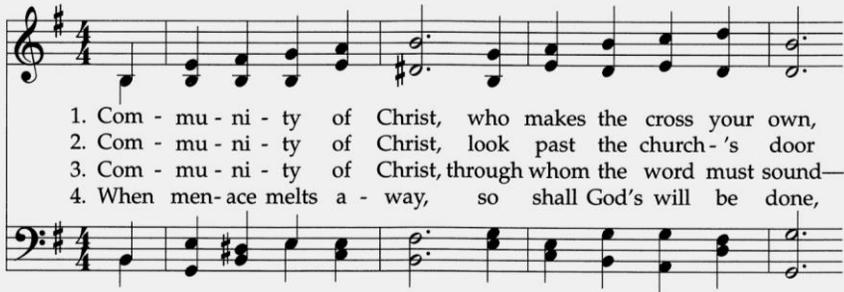
God of forever and right now, By your Spirit open our ears to hear your Word to us in scripture, in sermon, in song.

Open our eyes to see your Word to us in each other's faces, in troubling statistics, in our action together.

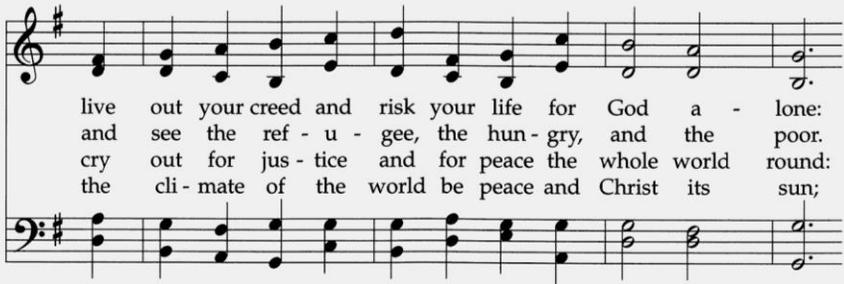
Open our hearts to feel your Word to us in the warmth of love, in the ache of sadness, in the energy of commitment.

Strengthen our desire for justice for all people, and our wills to advocate and organize, So that all children may grow up safe, and thrive in community. Amen.

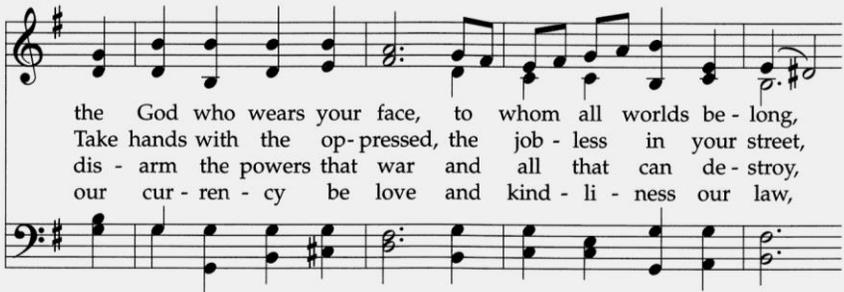
## Hymn *Community of Christ*



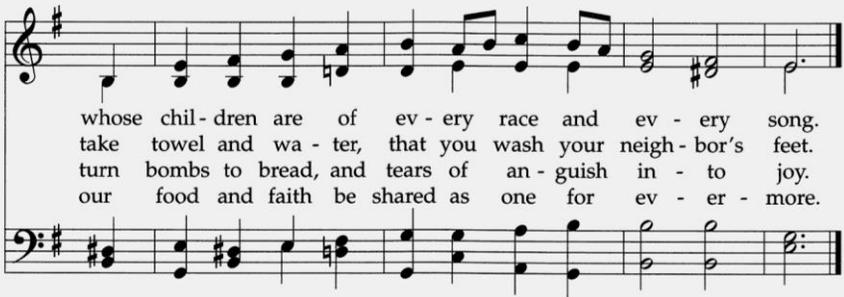
1. Com - mu - ni - ty of Christ, who makes the cross your own,  
2. Com - mu - ni - ty of Christ, look past the church - 's door  
3. Com - mu - ni - ty of Christ, through whom the word must sound—  
4. When men-ace melts a - way, so shall God's will be done,



live out your creed and risk your life for God a - lone:  
and see the ref - u - gee, the hun - gry, and the poor.  
cry out for jus - tice and for peace the whole world round:  
the cli - mate of the world be peace and Christ its sun;



the God who wears your face, to whom all worlds be - long,  
Take hands with the op - pressed, the job - less in your street,  
dis - arm the powers that war and all that can de - stroy,  
our cur - ren - cy be love and kind - li - ness our law,



whose chil - dren are of ev - ery race and ev - ery song.  
take towel and wa - ter, that you wash your neigh - bor's feet.  
turn bombs to bread, and tears of an - guish in - to joy.  
our food and faith be shared as one for ev - er - more.

LCC Virtual Choir

Naomi Columna and Gwen Delaney, sopranos; Gwen Delaney, alto; Ben Liu and Michael Komperda, tenors; Noah Hamrick and Ben Malkevitch, basses

## Pastoral Prayer

For those who are sick.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who are bereaved and supporting the bereaved.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those of us who are anxious and afraid.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those of us feeling alone and isolated.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who have jobs that put them at risk.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those of us who are especially vulnerable to infection.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who are confined to home but not safe at home.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the children who need the safety and care of school and those who serve them.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the teachers, who are forging a brand new way.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the medical professionals and health care workers around the world.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the scientists and researchers who are dedicating their lives to helping us - many of whom are under pressure and underfunded.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

For our leaders. Who really need the strength and humility of discernment.

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

God, hold these petitions and hold us, bring us closer to one another and allow us to feel the ways our hearts are connected, and then let us join in the prayer our Savior taught us:

## **The Lord's Prayer**

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.

## **Invitation to the Offering**

Let us praise God with our gifts of tithes and offerings.

## **Dedication Prayer**

Holy God, you do not choose favorites, but you pour out your blessings on all of us, trusting that we will empty our hearts, our lives, our treasure in meeting the needs of those around us. Bless these gifts and use them to bring healing and hope to your people. Amen.

## **Doxology**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise God all creatures here below.  
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts:  
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

## **Scripture Reading, read by Paula Deal**

### **Matthew 5:6**

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

### **John 4:1-15**

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard, 'Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John'— although it was not Jesus himself but his disciples who baptized— he left Judea and started back to Galilee. But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

## **Message**

\*\*\*We've included this transcript for the benefit of people who do not have audio access on their computer. Please keep in mind that it is written in a way it's spoken, so the grammar/sentence structure may feel a bit awkward to read. Even so, this feels like the best way to communicate to as many people as possible.

- I. The Rev. William Sloane Coffin, may his memory be a blessing, was a peace activist and pastor in the

Presbyterian Church and our own United Church of Christ. He worked tirelessly throughout his ministry to seek justice for those who hungered and thirst for it, specifically connected with the Civil Rights movement and peace movements of the 60s and 70s, and later in his life for the LGBTQ community. His memory is full of beautiful quotes and prayers and writings, but I specifically love this one because it refers to my favorite prophet Amos. He says, “It is one thing to say with the prophet Amos, ‘Let justice roll down like mighty waters,’ and quite another to work out the irrigation system.” He acknowledges the ways that we can call for a better world, proclaim the coming of a more just society, and dream of what God’s Kingdom might look like here on earth, but if we are not at the same time working out the irrigation system—the plumbing— to understand exactly how that justice and righteousness will come to flow so freely as mighty water, then our calls are in vain.

II. In the midst of our physical separation, you may not know that we continue to have Confirmation Class with LCC. We are 22 Confirmands strong with last year’s class finishing up and a new class starting. We meet outdoors at Kauffman Park in three rotating small groups of less than 10, with masks on. Rachel and I have loved that we get to work with this group of youth who absolutely hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice for all people in this world. They, along with our previous confirmation class and older youth at church, are on fire for the work of justice. These are youth who march, make signs, speak up about hot topics on social media even if it makes things tense for them, and stand strong for their beliefs about how to work out that irrigation system so that justice can flow like a mighty stream. They are LCC’s own Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, and David Hogg.

- A. Last Sunday at Confirmation Class we talked about social justice and its connection to scripture and to our theology. We spoke about the Prophets, about Liberation Theology which says that until all are free, none are free, and about how Jesus’ work throughout the Gospels is about seeking out the marginalized and offering a sense of love and belonging without changing who they are, but instead by loving them for who they are.
- B. Our youth said several things about their passion for social justice and specific issues that they’re on fire for that stuck with me, but at the end of the evening as we reflected back on what we talked about, one of our youth, Nora Germaine who is in 9th grade, said something along the lines of, “remember that social justice is not just a trend to post on Instagram. You don’t just do it once and then forget about it and move on to the next trend. We have to do our research, read more about causes and how to support them, and what we can do to make a change.”
- C. Nora was saying exactly what William Sloane Coffin said: “It’s one thing to say with the prophet Amos, ‘Let justice roll down like a mighty stream.’ And quite another to work out the irrigation system.”

III. This week’s Beatitude is about hungering and thirsting for righteousness. We often describe righteousness as a synonym for justice, but they don’t quite click interchangeably. Justice is defined more accurately as the picture of what we’re working towards: In the United Church of Christ, our Vision statement is the phrase, “United in Christ’s love, a Just world for all.” That’s what we picture; that’s what we envision; that’s what we yearn for. But righteousness, I’d say, is more about the actions

we're taking in order to accomplish that vision. So, to act justly is to be righteous.

- A. "It's one thing to say with the prophet Amos, 'Let justice roll down like a mighty stream.' And quite another to work out the irrigation system." In some sense, William Sloane Coffin's quote delineates the difference between justice and righteousness.
- B. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be fed. Jesus is speaking to those who are yearning to work out the irrigation system. He is speaking to those who have an insatiable desire to get elbows deep in the work, to get their boots on the ground and deep in the puddles, and he says, those who hunger and thirst to do this justice-seeking work, will be fed.

IV. I paired this Beatitude alongside the story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well, because it is a story about a woman who thirsts for a drink of water from an ancient community well, but Jesus offers her Living Water instead.

- A. I've preached on this text before, even as recently as the very first week of remote worship on March 15th. But I want to focus today on the way that Jesus works out the irrigation system.
- B. He sits down next to a woman who would not normally sit with someone like him "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" She's skeptical of him because men have not been kind to her before. We know this because of the context of this passage. We know that she hungers and thirsts for something better than what she has. We know that she is a part of a system that is not just towards women, or divorced women like the scripture reveals her to be, or towards Samaritans

for that matter, who were oppressed under the Empire.

- C. As he sits next to her Jesus paints a picture of justice. He demonstrates what it looks like to love your neighbor as yourself as he listens to her speak, values her presence, and cares about her needs, and he offers her, as a picture of justice, a drink of not just water, but Living Water.
- D. And she asks him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that Living Water (whatever that is)?" And Jesus says a thing about fixing the irrigation system. He says, "the water I'll give you doesn't require a bucket. It's not about this well, no matter how many generations old it is, and how well it has functioned to nourish this land and these people...The water that I will give will become in you a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."
- E. This is a new irrigation system. Not one made by human hands. It is an irrigation system that feeds and quenches the needs of the lost, the last the least, the marginalized and oppressed, the vulnerable, the hungry, the thirsty. This is an irrigation system built on grace, on justice, on humility, on neighborly compassion and love and belonging. This is a new irrigation system built by Jesus as an act of Righteousness.

V. One of the most beautiful parts of my ministry here at LCC is watching our members and friends work out the irrigation system together and in your own lives, careers, and callings. It's not just our youth. We are full of members who would sit at that well next to someone in need and call out the reality that not everyone has a bucket, or not everyone can get to the well, or even quite literally we

have members who are working on the fact that the water in some parts of Cleveland is poisoning its citizens because the irrigation system isn't adequate, and they question how we can build more efficient systems that serve all of God's people. We have members who are building those systems as I speak, who are deep in the mud and muck and they stand there with an unquenchable hunger and thirst for righteousness, for a just world for all.

- A. We have members— you know who you are— who are in the underbelly of the immigration system, tutoring refugees to prepare them for citizenship, transforming foreclosed homes into adequate housing, offering affordable or even free legal advice to immigrants and asylum seekers.
- B. We have members who know that the arts, music, dancing, drama, writing are a means of expression that can speak truth to power and transform the way we treat our neighbors.
- C. We have members who know that our education system and our curriculum are essential to narrowing the achievement gap in our country, and are in the arena fighting tirelessly to ensure that this pandemic does not decrease graduation rates and post-secondary program eligibility.
- D. We have members who recognize that righteousness means seeking adequate and affordable healthcare for all, members who set up safe and dignified apartments for homeless people, members who write letters and seek policy change in their workplaces to ensure the safety of the LGBTQ Community, and who work for intentional change to eliminate the racial disparities we see in every sector of our society.
- E. So many of you, I'm sure if you stop for a moment, can think of the ways in which you have not simply

echoed the cry of Amos proclaiming the vision that justice will roll like a mighty stream, but you are removing the clogs in the irrigation system to let that water flow freely through it.

- F. Many of you might think of the ways that, like Jesus, you sat with someone and offered a new kind of water from an entirely different well built on grace, on justice, on humility, on neighborly compassion and love and belonging.

VI. The Beatitudes are a call to action to Be the Church. They are a call to action to amplify the work of justice alongside Jesus so that we don't just paint a picture of justice, but we pursue it with our actions, with our money, with our votes, with our voices.

- A. You all know by now that I have long-taken to heart Rev. Dr. King's letter from a Birmingham Jail when discerning how to lead a predominately white church. I usually read a specific part that is addressed to us, but today I want to read this part. He writes: "There was a time when the church was very powerful -- in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days, the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society... If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning...".
- B. Preaching Professor and Theologian Karoline Lewis says, "The Beatitudes are a call to action for the sake of creating the world God imagines." Our

hunger and thirst for righteousness demonstrate a desire to bring about that world in whatever way we can. It will not always make us popular. It might keep us up at night. It will not be easy. And these days, in the midst of uncertainty and constant shifts, cancelations, skepticism, fear, divisiveness, and a feeling of defeat, our imagination for fixing the irrigation system may feel limited.

- C. And yet Beloved, we cannot let our hunger and our thirst for the world God imagines to dissipate. We must respond to the call to “transform the mores of society” as Dr. King says. We are called to hunger and thirst for, and then seize the opportunity to weave a new garment, to offer a new cup of water, to design a new irrigation system, that will satiate the thirst and satisfy the hunger of all of God’s people.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **God Moment, by Paula Deal**

In The Columns last month, we briefly introduced a new idea for church called "God Moments. This is just a simple way to bring more voices and familiar faces into our Virtual Church services. Take 3-5 minutes to tell us about a way you saw God working in your life recently. Be creative! Show us a beloved pet, a family heirloom, or tell us a joke that reminded you of God's gift of laughter. Take us on a walk to your favorite spot in the park, or show us your home office setup. You can record yourself on your own device or contact the church office to set up a time to record. You are welcome to sign up to be a liturgist and share your God Moment in the same week.

### **Benediction**

Go forth from this place, even if you stay right where you are, as people who hunger and thirst for righteousness, in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, mother of us all. Amen

### **Postlude**

*Fantasy Piece no. 2* by Robert Schumann  
Meghan Guegold, French horn; Ben Malkevitch, piano  
(a remote collaboration)

Written prayers for this service are adapted from UCC Worship Ways and Thom Shuman’s Lectionary Liturgies.

***Our Mission Statement proclaims our common goal.***

*We strive to be a welcoming,  
worshipping community of faith,  
helping people discover and deepen  
their relationship with God, growing as  
disciples of Christ, and reaching out in  
faith and loving service.*

***In keeping with the spirit of our Mission Statement,***

*Lakewood Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ,  
is an Open and Affirming congregation.  
We welcome people of all sexual orientation,  
ages, differing abilities, and ethnic, economic,  
and racial backgrounds into  
the full life and ministry of our church.  
We declare this in the name of the Still Speaking God,  
whose Son, Jesus Christ, welcomed  
all people into God’s circle of grace.*