

Lakewood Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, January 10, 2021



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 with us at Lakewood Congregational Church in this New Year. Before we begin our worship today, I want to invite you to find elements for Holy Communion, because we will partake together today, as God connects us across time and space and calls us together despite our physical distance. You might find bread and wine, or a cracker and juice: I believe that God does not put up barriers to Grace, and so whatever table we come to with hearts open to Sacrament, God is there to bless us.

In addition to that, it is Baptism of Christ Sunday. So perhaps you'd like to bring a glass of water with you to worship today too. Because you'll hear the word water a lot in the next half hour, and sometimes we don't realize how thirsty we are until we hear the word or see water flowing.

So: If you are new among us, welcome. Please know we are glad you're here; you're welcome in our remote community and you're welcome in our physical community when the time is right. 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 a loving God who welcomes us all. As I stand in this sanctuary, I join my heart with you and I pray that you might feel the refuge of this space.

May the Peace of Christ be with you. Let us worship God.

Prelude

Jesus by the Waterside (traditional)

Maic D'Agostino, voice and ukulele

Invocation

Creating, Calling, and Faithful God,
we come to this time and place to be with you,
to worship you, and to learn from you.

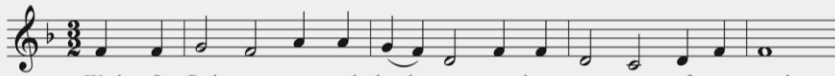
May our time together

be like your creation of light in the shadows
that you called good.

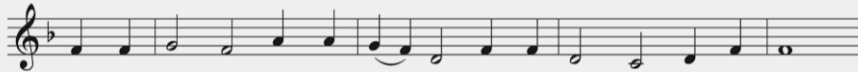
May it be that you would call us good

while we respond to your call and as we listen to you. Amen.

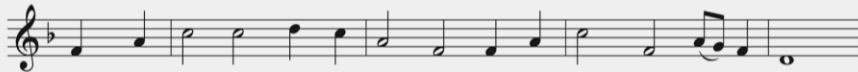
Hymn *Wash, O God, Your Sons and Daughters*



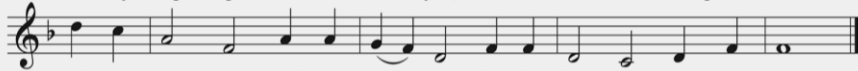
1. Wash, O God, your sons and daugh - ters, new-born crea - tures of your womb.
2. Ev - 'ry day we need your nur - ture; by your love may we be fed.
3. O how deep your ho - ly wis - dom! Un - i - mag - ined, all your ways!



Num - ber them a - mong your peo - ple, raised like Christ from death and tomb.
Let us join your feast, par - tak - ing cup of bless - ing, liv - ing bread.
To your name be glo - ry, hon - or! With our lives we wor - ship, praise!



Weave them gar - ments bright and spark - ling; com - pass them with love and light.
God, re - new us; guide our foot - steps; free from sin and all its snares,
We your peo - ple stand be - fore you, wa - ter - washed and Spir - it - born.



Fill, a - noint them; send your Spir - it, ho - ly dove and heart's de - light.
one with Christ in liv - ing, dy - ing, by your Spir - it, chil - dren, heirs.
By your grace, our lives we of - fer. Re - cre - ate us; God, trans - form!

LCC Virtual Choir

Jessie Neilson, soprano; Gwen Delaney, alto; Ben Liu, tenor;

Noah Hamrick, Tim Hampton, and Robert Wenz, basses

Pastoral Prayer

As we witness this unprecedented violence and rage play out in and around our nation's capital, please recall and hold onto these words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."

Last week we celebrated Epiphany, which means "showing forth." We proclaimed the following of the bright star at its rising. May each of us show forth, shine forth, be the bright star and follow the bright star at its rising. May we be the love of Christ that heals, reconciles, and unites. Please pray for our country, be the light. Work for peace and justice. Know that God abides. Let us pray.

Creator God, you grant us the breath of life and baptize us with water and the Spirit. You bestow our identity as your beloved people of faith who belong to Jesus Christ. We thank you for claiming us as your children, directing us to your task, humbling us in our strength, and consoling us in our weakness.

Just as you entrusted Jesus with the mission to give his life for others, so you have called us to serve, working for the welfare of our siblings. Strengthen the efforts of all who seek to aid those who face the daily challenges of homelessness due to poverty or disruptive violence. Use us, and shape our societies, to feed the hungry, secure employment, provide shelter from the cold, and offer hope for the future.

Comfort all who mourn the loss of loved ones, and make known your presence in the lives of those who feel alone and abandoned. Your impartiality, God of all, transcends all our differences. We pray for your healing and reconciling love wherever alienation, hatred, war, and oppression threaten lives. Protect those who serve in the military, and also the people in the lands where they serve. Guide the political leaders of all nations toward harmony and toward shaping a world which especially cares for the most

vulnerable. Bring justice wherever workers are paid poorly and their rights crushed. Bring peace and wholeness to those struggling with health issues. Especially now to those with Covid-19. Bring a sense of connection to each and every one of us.

All this we lift up to you, O God, because we know that you care for us and your creation through Jesus Christ. Hear us now as we pray together the prayer he taught, saying, Our Father . . .

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

We continue to do the work and mission of this church and we are grateful for all of the gifts and contributions that you are able to give. We are also reminded that the children have been missing the Miracle Jar. Rachel has some ideas for your children in Faith Formation. Miracle Jar contributions go to support our Global Ministries. So I invite you to give your gifts as you are able now and then we will dedicate them.

Dedication Prayer

God may these gifts be for your world healing, love, justice and the binding up of the nation, We pray this in your name. Amen

Scripture Reading, read by Tom Leatherman

Baptism of Christ - Mark 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

The Baptism of Jesus

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

A message About our Rock Tumbler

(see video of the D'Agostino's rock tumbler in action)

Trust in the Slow Work of God

Above all, trust in the slow work of God

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through

some stages of instability-
and that it may take a very long time. And so I think it is with
you.

your ideas mature gradually - let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to
force them on, as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances
acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow. Only God could say what this new
spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the
benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the
anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.
- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1881-1955)

Message

I'll connect my rock tumbling to my sermon here in a few
moments, but first let us pray.

God may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our
hearts in this hour be acceptable in your sight, for you are our
rock and our redeemer Amen.

It has been quite a week. Amen? Amen. Late, late on Tuesday
night, I listened to the words of Senator-Elect Reverend Raphael
Warnock who said of his mother, Verlene, "The 82-year-old hands
that used to pick somebody else's cotton went to the polls and
picked her youngest son to be a United States senator." My heart
was full on Wednesday morning with such a profound statement
about how much our nation has changed in the lifetime of an 82
year old, but before long the day turned. January 6, 2021 lives
alongside September 11th, 2001; November 22, 1963; December
7, 1941 and other days that live in infamy. We will not soon forget

the shock of domestic terrorists overrunning our nation's Capitol,
nor the responses of our elected officials.

It all felt like utter chaos, and perhaps the most horrifying part
was that so many of those terrorists held crosses and Christian
flags, and signs indicating a Christian nationalism that perverts
the name of the One we follow. This is not about Political Party
or party platform or policy differences or "agree to disagree."
This was heresy, an abomination, a desecration, a defilement of
the Gospel of Jesus Christ in which the poor are lifted, the
foreigner is welcomed, and the sick are healed; and it was a
defilement of our democracy and our Nation and every person in
this land.

On this Baptism of Christ Sunday, I recall that in the United
Church of Christ book of worship, the first Baptismal vow that we
affirm is this one: "Do you renounce the powers of evil and
receive the freedom of new life in Christ?" Domestic terrorism is
evil, and I renounce it.

I am comforted in remembering that our Christian story has
something to say about chaos, though. I'm sharing it the way my
colleague Reverend Lori Walke shared it with me this week. She
said, "I don't know if this is exactly how it happened, but I know
this story is true.

In the beginning, there was a formless void, a nothingness that
stretched endlessly. There was no place to grow roots or fly kites.
Only chaos. Thick, heavy, swirling chaos. But it was out of this
chaos that the Holy began to create. The Spirit swooped and
soared. And oh, was it something. Really something. Out of the
chaos, God created the most unexpected things. Out of the chaos,
God created wonder, consciousness, belovedness. Out of the
chaos, God created a place where life could thrive.

Then, God created us. And declared it all good. Very good.

And the story, as it was told to me and probably to you, was that we were made in the image of God. Which means, of course, that we, too, are creators. Deep in our bones, we have seen this chaos before. So we know what to do. We will take this chaos, this frenzy, this disorder, this mess, and create. We will create wonder, and consciousness, and belovedness. We will create a place where life can thrive.

We can create something out of this chaos that God will recognize as good. Very good.”

I have told you before that in Baptism we're reminded that God breaks down dams. I learned that from the Baptism Poem my husband wrote, which I've shared with you before and I'll share again someday. He wrote, "God's plan is not to dam but to break the dam." Those are both three letter words-- a dam: a barrier constructed to hold us back. God's plan is not to put obstacles in our way, not to make this world more difficult than it already is, but instead to tear down any wall that prevents us from flowing freely through our belovedness as God created us to do.

Our world feels so very full of dams these days. There is so much that is preventing us from flowing freely through our belovedness. Many days feel like a combination of chaos and claustrophobia. And yet we know that God's way is to create goodness out of chaos, and freedom out of bondage.

I love the story of Jesus' Baptism. I have so much to say about it, but only have time to share this much: Jesus on that day participated in this profoundly human act. He went out to the Galilean countryside, not to the lofty, extravagant baths outside of the Temple, where the wealthy travelers stopped to cleanse

themselves from the outside world, but to this public, communal display right in the muddy, mucky, leechy Jordan.

God sent Jesus because God knew God couldn't fully understand the human condition without getting down into the mud with us. Jesus knew the pressures of the world and the expectations of society. He knew that traveling the human journey was not and would not become easy. And so he came to ask his cousin John in humble mutuality to bring him down into the waters and bring him up anew.

In the Baptism of Christ, God broke down dams. The veil between heaven and earth was open wide and the overlap between heaven and earth was so firmly and fully occupied and God looked upon it all and said, "this is good." The dove descended and Jesus and his followers were released, unlocked, and sent to flow wildly through the world to show others of their belovedness.

I often wish this was quick work. On the days when chaos and claustrophobia seem too much to bear, I wish God's work was quick and concise. I wish God would open the heavens and send down that dove and release us and all evil and injustice and greed and hatred would be gone. But I'm reminded to trust and have faith in the slow work of God...that it is in the friction and the erosion and the time and the patience that dams are broken down, that the ridged edges are made smooth, and that all along, regardless of what is happening in the world, Jesus remains with us in the mud, and we remain beloved.

Today I'm going to invite you with me to the Metroparks. No don't get up, just stay where you are, I'll bring the Metroparks to you with Movie Magic. And when we're there we're going to renew our Baptismal Vows and we're going to take Communion. Now, if you haven't been Baptized, come with us anyway. There are no barriers to God's grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

***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.

Remembrance of Baptism

Pastor:

Beloved, the psalmist says, "You are gods, children of the Most High – all of you." (Psalm 82:6) We don't choose to be like God; God already chose us to be like God, every single one of us. God already chose you, each of you, but today we remember and celebrate that choice. We celebrate the power of grace. In baptism, God reminds us we were born out of the first waters into this everlasting power. For that, Church, say, "Thanks be to God!"

ALL:

Thanks be to God!

Pastor:

Jesus himself was baptized in a river that was murky and unpredictable. From that point on, his mission was clear: Free the oppressed. Heal the sick. Release the prisoner. Feed the hungry. Sate the thirsty. Dethrone the powerful. Overturn the tables of the exploitative. Expose hypocrisy and lies. Light the world on fire with truth. This is the gospel. And for that, Church, say, "Thanks be to God!"

ALL:

Thanks be to God!

Pastor:

The promise of the gospel, and the commitment to fulfill it, is not only for us but for our children. Jesus, a poor refugee, a

carpenter's child, the baby of an unmarried teenager, shook the very foundations of the earth. This sacrament is a symbol of the power that resides in each one of us to shake the world. Baptism is a covenant between God and the church and all adherents to Jesus' world-shaking, earth-shattering Way. And for that, once again, we say, "Thanks be to God!"

ALL:

Thanks be to God!

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Pastor:

Let us join together in reaffirming our baptismal promises to follow the Way by answering, "I do."

Do you reject all evil?

I do.

And all its greed?

I do.

And all its hate?

I do.

And all its fear?

I do.

And all its injustice?

I do.

And all its violence?

I do.

And all its indifference?

I do.

Do you believe in God?

I do.

Do you believe in the Way of Jesus, in preaching good news to the poor, in proclaiming release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, in liberating the oppressed, and in proclaiming this year as the year of God's favor?

I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in doing justice, in loving kindness, and in walking humbly with your God?

I do.

Do you believe you are but dust and earth?

I do.

Do you believe you are made in the image of God?

I do.

And so Let us pray together:

We thank you, God, for the gift of creation called forth by your Word. Before the earth had shape and form, your Spirit moved over the waters. Out of the waters of the deep, you formed the firmament and brought forth the earth to sustain all life. In the time of Moses, your people passed the Red Sea waters from slavery to freedom and crossed the flowing waters of the Jordan river to enter the promised land. In time you sent Jesus Christ who was nurtured in the water of Mary's womb. Jesus was baptized by John at the river Jordan and became living water to the woman at the Samaritan well. He washed the feet of his disciples and sent them forth to baptize all nations by water and the Holy Spirit....POUR WATER...Bless this water gracious God. By your Holy Spirit continue your creative work through this water and through the waters of our homes...that through You, and through the nourishment of this element, we will continue to grow in love and faith. Amen.

So through a glass of water or just through watching this water flow, I invite you to remember your baptism, or, if you aren't baptized, remember that there is no barrier to this promise: You

were born beloved, you have lived beloved, you will always be beloved, in the name of the God who Creates, the name of Jesus who leads the Way, and the name of the Spirit that enkindles our hearts. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Service of Holy Communion

Celebration of Holy Communion

Invitation to Communion

So come to this table of
bread and cup for sharing,
and many, many hopes for the world.
Come to this table, even if you want
to be laying everything down
because you are so weary of being fearful,
isolated or essential to everyone but you.
Come to this table if you are swimming
in Zoom meetings, virtual education,
financial risk, or grief.
Come to this table if you milked
all the joy from Christmas -
enough to carry you into 2021...
or not nearly enough.
Come to this table,
if you have stopped dancing,
even though
you are carrying many gifts,
or you need to be healed
in friend or stranger,
in the old story
Of water
and the warm bread and sweet cup
shared right now.

Words of Remembering

We remember a Child born to change everything
and we remember that the baby
named Jesus,
grew up to help people
in their hurting and in their loss,
traveled as many roads as we do,
and taught us with simple words
we can understand,
and stories we come to many times
to find new meaning.

At Passover he sat with his friends and those he had met and
called along the way and he blessed unleavened bread.
And he poured wine and he poured love freely.
And he gave it to his disciples and said, “This is my body given
for you, do this in remembrance of me.” and in the same way
after supper he shared the cup and he said “this is the cup of
the new covenant in my blood, do this in remembrance of me.”

Prayer of Consecration

Emmanuel, God you are with us.
Bless this bread in our hands,
and the cup we lift.
May this bread and cup be so sacred
we never lose track of the Star’s shining,

Sharing of the Elements

This is the Bread of Life. Take and Eat.
This is the Cup of Blessing. Take and Drink.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

(based on Howard Thurman’s ‘The Work of Christmas’)
God, we thank you that when the star in the sky is gone, the kings
and princes are home, the shepherds are back with their flocks,
and we are tempted to pack the story away, this very Bread and
Cup gives us the hope and courage to begin the true work of

Christmas. Help us to find the lost, heal the broken, feed the
hungry, release the prisoner, rebuild the nations, bring peace
among all, and make to music in the Heart. Amen.

Benediction

Go in peace, beloved, beloved yesterday, beloved today, beloved
tomorrow. Trust in the slow work of God. In the name of the
Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One God, Mother of us all.
Amen.

Postlude

Shine a Light by Ben Malkevitch
Ben Malkevitch, voice and piano

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
- Call the church office at (216) 221-9555 to discuss other options

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.*

