

Lakewood Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, February 7, 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

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.

We will have an Annual Meeting at 11:00am, on Sunday, February 7, via Zoom.

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

It Is Enough to Know by Frances Porter Ross
Ben Liu, tenor; Ben Malkevitch, piano
(a remote collaboration)

Gathering Prayer

Eternal God, Creator of the universe, we call on you. You greet us where we are and you connect us to each other.

We give you thanks for making it possible to worship you through a web of connection, and to ponder your eternal mysteries.

Make us, creatures of this time and space, ready collaborators with your endless grace. Amen.

Hymn *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*

LCC Virtual Choir

Gwendolyn Delany and Victoria Peacock, sopranos; Gwendolyn DeLaney, alto; Steve Hotchkiss, Michael Komperda, Ben Liu, tenors; Noah Hamrick, Tim Hampton, Robert Wenz, basses
Ben Malkevitch, organ

1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
3. To all, life thou giv - est, to both great and small;
4. Thou reign - est in glo - ry; thou dwell - est in light,

in light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might;
in all life thou liv - est, the true life of all;
thine an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight;

most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
thy jus - tice like moun - tains high soar - ing a - bove
we blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree,
all prais - es we ren - der: O help us to see

al - might - y, vic - to - rious, thy great name we praise.
thy clouds which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.
and with - er and per - ish, but naught chang - eth thee.
that on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee.

Pastoral Prayer

God of our lives and our concerns, God of this world and the universe beyond our imagination, help us to be still in these moments, to know that you are here in our midst, to lift our hearts up to you, to settle down, to slow down, to rest in you.

We give you thanks for moments of grace—for another day of life, for the rhythmic cycles of nature preparing to burst forth into spring, for the ways our heartbeats connect through your grace to show forth love and light and blessing to this world, despite our failures and limits.

Great God, you are our teacher, and you know the groaning that becomes ever louder in our world—the deep pain of all who have lost loved ones. You know the passion of our youth who so want a world of justice and love of neighbor. You know the deeply held convictions of your people. We pray that through all of the anger and grief and courageous testimony and tearful words, your Spirit will sweep through the hearts of our lawmakers, so that the common good for all becomes paramount in their desires.

Merciful God, you also know the losses in our midst, and so we pray for those who have lost loved ones—parents, spouses, children, grandchildren. Hold out your hope for those who mourn, and hear their pain, but also help them to draw close to you. We pray for those who have received unwelcome diagnoses; give them courage. We pray for those who are recovering from serious surgery; give them strength and hope. We pray for those who suffer from a depression that won't leave; break into their lives with your light.

As always, we pray for an end to war and a lasting peace brought about by justice. We pray for an end to racism and sexism and prejudice of any kind and ask for your help in making us increasingly aware of our own judgments. We pray for forgiveness in our own lives and ask for the ability to forgive others who have

hurt us. We pray for the courage to drink the cup of discipleship no matter the cost. And, God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus and his teachings to the world and to our faith. Help us to keep taking steps in following the path he has set before us. We pray all of this, with gratitude and humility, saying together the prayer Jesus taught: 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

Dedication Prayer

God of all that is, all we have, all we are - we give.

We give these gifts as we reach across the thresholds of our concerns.

We give these gifts, knowing that they will give so much more.

Through Jesus Christ. 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 Darren Toms

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Message

State of the Church

He comes with the folks we saw last week: two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew and James and John, and is told that Simon's mother-in-law is in bed with a fever. She is not named, which shows that she was an ordinary woman.

Jesus comes into the house and finds the sick woman. He takes her by the hand and lifts her up. Apparently she is healed right away because she begins to serve them. The word for serving is

diakoneo, which denotes not only providing them with food, but also service in general as women did in those days as part of Mediterranean hospitality.

For the past 10 months we've been receiving communion in our homes. I know this is probably awkward or uncomfortable for some of you. It doesn't come naturally to me either. And yet I've recognized the power of God's presence in the breaking of the bread and I hope you have too. It reminds me of different places and times throughout my life when I've partaken in the sacrament.

I wonder if as we break bread later today, we might think of the healing presence of the Gospel in our lives and the way in which our history of receiving Holy Communion in different places and times throughout our lives has given us the spirit of service, of Diakonie, that allows us to participate in this meal in remembrance of Jesus, in remembrance of the Gospel, in remembrance of the Body of Christ.

So I want to read you a poem.

(Mark 1: 29-39) Maren Tirabassi

Jesus was fed so many times -
sabbath meals at home,
Matthew's table,
Martha's overambitious feast,
the boy's lunch,
Simon with the wide platters
and the narrow heart,

the making-amends-meal
of the short man
who climbed down and down
and down from a tree
to see Jesus, fork in his hand,

“taste this”
and it was forgiveness.

But this was the first day
he was in the healing business,
and Naomi,
(it’s a good mother-in-law name)
had a fever so high
she could not get up
to plate food pre-cooked for sabbath
before her son-in-law’s
new teacher came.

Jesus lifted her up,
forehead burning virus and all,
and fever was broken,
compassion poured,
and, in gratitude for what he did for her,
she broke bread for them
poured wine into their cups.
and served them all...

As evening fell, others came—
with illnesses of mind and body,
gaping holes of loss,
and he healed them through the night
as they clamored at the door,

but he had time to watch,
as she baked bread after bread, fried fish,
opened jugs of olive oil,
lifted a cup always running over.
And Jesus thought,
as dawn came up in prayer -
when I go,
perhaps this serving,

and these old hands of love

is what I shall leave behind
in remembrance of me.

Here’s the truth: I’m not ready to talk about the State of the
Church.

Romans 1:7-12; 5:1-5; 8:18, 22-25; 12:4-18; 14:7-8

Romans 1:7-12

To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because
your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. 9 For God, whom
I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of his Son, is my
witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my
prayers, 10 asking that by God’s will I may somehow at last
succeed in coming to you. 11 For I am longing to see you so that I
may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— 12 or
rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s
faith, both yours and mine.

Romans 5:1-5

1 Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through
our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access
to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of
sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast
in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4
and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,
5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been
poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given
to us.

Romans 8:18, 22-25

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; 23and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 12:4-18

3 As in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 14:7-8

7 We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

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.

Invitation to Communion

Come to this table
because you want to celebrate--
care in illness,
comfort in sorrow,
healing beyond curing,
peace in forgiveness,
hope in times of fear or threat.

Come to this table
because you claim your abundance,
as culture defines it
or as your heart knows it.

Come to this table
because you have discovered
your own generosity
and need to start giving.

Come to this table
because you are willing
to be welcomed,
even when that is awkward,
and willing to welcome
to the limit of your resources,

and even to offer welcome
knowing it may be rejected.
Come to this teeter-totter table,
where the bakers and the starving,
touch elbows and hearts.

Words of Remembering

We remember that Jesus Christ came
from a culture of oasis hospitality,
stories of manna, grain gleaned,
a raven feeding the prophet Elijah,
Abigail hurrying to offer a feast,
and a Passover meal
for which everything stopped
and all were fed.

We remember that Jesus came
from both family Sabbath evenings,
and the rule-bending
of grain plucked from a field
when someone was hungry.

We remember
that Jesus remembered,
that on his first day in the healing business,
he lifted up a woman from her fever
and she responded by serving everyone
from the generosity of her wellness.
Jesus sat and ate at that table.

We remember
that Jesus remembered
that, near the end of his ministry,
he called a short man from a tree
into a forgiveness so abundant

it became a meal for the least and lost.
Jesus sat and ate at that table, too.

And we remember that Jesus knew,
when it was the last Passover,
how important healing
and turning lives around was,
and blessed unleavened bread.
and poured wine and love freely,
inviting us always to share
both brokenness and grace.

Prayer of Consecration

Gentle Host, rest upon us as you rested upon water and light,
earth and creatures, human beings, all in your image, and even
the cooking pots and serving bowls of those who love you. Send
your Spirit of life and love, power and blessing upon your children
that this bread may be broken and gathered in love and this cup
poured out to give hope to all. Risen Christ, live in us, that we
may live in you. Breathe in us, that we may breathe in you.

(as is the tradition in silence or with music playing - breaking,
touching or lifting the bread, pouring, touching or lifting the cup)

Sharing of the Elements

Leader: Let us in our many places receive the gift of God, the
bread of heaven.

Unison: We are one in Christ in the bread we share.

Leader: Let us with our many needs and many blessings,
receive the gift of God, the cup of blessing.

Unison: We are one in Christ in the cup we share.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Spirit of Christ, we give thanks for this grace, from our deep
heritage of sanctuary Eucharists and community meals, and from
our personal memories of many generous plates and your Holy

Supper. Wrap your hopeful presence around all whose bodies, spirits and hearts need healing or hope, and let us become your compassionate spoon, your safe refuge. May we be lifted up to serve you and all your children in the world. Amen

Benediction

May God bless and keep you
May God's face shine through yours.
And may the glorious, + Triune God
Protect and keep you
All the days long. Amen.

Postlude

Sortie on CHATTERLEY

Ben Malkevitch, organ

(Note from Ben: there is something about the monumental sound of the organ which mirrors the beauty of church architecture, stunningly designed and firm as the rock of our faith. I thought I would reflect that in photos of several beautiful churches in the Cleveland area.)

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.*

