

Lakewood Congregational Church

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Sunday, July 30, 2023



An Order of Worship to be followed in your home,
along with our Livestream Service at 10:00 am

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.

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.

Welcome

Rev. Catherine Lawrence

Prelude

Caleb Culver, Cory Asbury,
and Ran Jackson

Reckless Love

Chris Burns, voice and guitar

Dave Harris, djembe

Call to Worship

One: O Creator of the Cosmos, who knows what the kin-dom of God is like, but also remembers what it was like before.

Many: Before creation and kin-doms, before mustard seeds and fine pearls, before yeast and bakers to make bread.

One: So, you know what it is like to long for them, to imagine them into being,

Many: And it is from this longing for your kin-dom and for you that we enter our worship.

One: Yes, come, let us praise and pray to our God of promise.
Many: **Let us rejoice in the Good News together—how nothing can separate us from the presence of God. Amen.**

Opening Hymn

#100

When Morning Gilds the Skies

Prayer of Invocation (in unison)

O Spirit, who helps us in our struggles, and teaches us how to pray when we don't know what to say or how to feel, we call on you from a sigh too deep for words. Within that sigh, we wonder, we question, and we hope that all things do, indeed, work together for your good. And in this experience of being here together, in this time set apart to be side by side in community, we are reminded how connected we already are. Let us open ourselves to your presence here. Let us seek first, the kin-dom of God, and in our searching, may we be found by you, Beloved, the One who searches for us first. Amen.

Special Music

Bryan Sirchio and Chrissie Mueke

We Are Changemakers
VBS Changemakers

A Time of Prayer

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (in unison)

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.

A Time of Sharing

Call to Offering

Offertory

Lyndell Leatherman

Shall We Gather at the River
Ben Malkevitch, piano

Doxology (in unison)

**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.**

Prayer of Dedication (in unison)

Like the net that was thrown into the sea and brought in fish of every kind, we celebrate the multitude and diversity of gifts that have been shared here today. May God bless these treasures with the abundance of Christ's love and passion to embody justice in our world. Amen.

The Reading of God's Word

Beth Abbott

Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.'

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

‘Have you understood all this?’ They answered, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’

Romans 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to

condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.’

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reflection

Rev. Geoffrey Black

Small Things Considered

Closing Hymn

#499

When Love Is Found

Benediction

Postlude

Lyndell Leatherman

Heaven’s Roll Call
Ben Malkevitch, piano

Rev. Geoffrey A. Black



My adult life has been an incredible journey of learning, spiritual growth, and service to humanity in Jesus’ name. Specifically, I have had a career in ministry spanning 48 years. My first call to ministry was as an Assistant Chaplain at Brown University. Following that, I served as a local church pastor, a national staff person,

a conference minister and national executive of the United Church of Christ.

Since retiring from the post of General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ in 2015 and following a sabbatical, I have resumed active participation in the mission and ministry of the United Church of Christ with an approach that I refer to as, “selective engagement.” With this approach, I served as Visiting Professor of Leadership and Ecumenical Studies at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO. From 2015 through 2018. Currently, I serve as a trustee of Tougaloo College and on the Board of Directors of United Church Homes. I am also a member of the UCC’s Just Peace Steering Committee.

Currently, I volunteer with the Ohio State University Extension Service Master Gardener Program in Cuyahoga County. As a Master Gardener Volunteer, I work with a team of Master Gardeners teaching gardening to the 4th Grade students at Ben Franklin Elementary School in Cleveland. Additionally, I enjoy a range of outdoor fitness activities including walking, hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing.

With time now to pursue my lifelong interest in photography, African American History and Jazz, I am creating a photographic website titled, The Monumental African American, which documents monuments throughout the United States that commemorate aspects of African American History and culture. On the drawing board, I am creating a podcast on Jazz and Spirituality.

This is mid-Autumn for me, but I know that I am heading toward Winter. I have lived long, experienced accomplishment, love, and joy as well as failure, frustration and sorrow. For the wrong that I have done, I live a life of penance. For the many blessings that I have received including God’s forgiveness, my gratitude is profound. My life partner, Patricia and I reside in Lakewood, Ohio. We are active members of South Haven United Church of Christ in Bedford, Ohio.

Our Mission Statement proclaims our common goal.

We strive to be a welcoming, worshiping 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. Wherever you are on life’s journey, we welcome you and all people of every sexual orientation, age, ability, gender identity and expression, and ethnic, economic, and racial background into the full life and ministry of our church. We declare this in the everlasting grace of the Still-Speaking God.

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, and 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
- 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