

# Lake Merritt United Methodist Church



An Inclusive Christian Community of Oakland

*Sustaining a vibrant and growing congregation through Christian spiritual transformation, making our work and the church relevant and visible.*

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**LIVESTREAM WORSHIP SERVICE**

## Gifts of the Dark Wood

*Lenten Season Series*

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*  
Joan Miller, *Music Director*  
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February 21, 2021  
*First Sunday of Lent*  
Celebration of Divine Worship

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WELCOME

INTROIT

This Path

Chuck Bell & Marcia McFee

Judi and Wayne Fabrizio

*There's a path... though it winds its way through darkness  
We would choose... to avoid it if we could  
We awake... to an unexpected calling  
God says, "come... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"*

**Moment of Spiritual Reflection**

*There's a path (echo: **there's a path**) ... though it winds its way through darkness  
We would choose (**we would choose**) ... to avoid it if we could  
We awake (**we awake**) ... to an unexpected calling  
God says, "come (**God says, "come**) ... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"*

OPENING PRAYER

**Unexpected Love, enter our lives  
and open us to the gifts residing deep  
within the Holy Darkness of our lives.**

**Walk with us,  
speak to us,  
call to us.**

**In your many names, we pray. Amen.**

OPENING SONG

Take My Life

UMH 399

- 1. Take my life, and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days;  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.  
Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.*
- 2. Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold;  
not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.*

3. *Take my will, and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.  
Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.*

## SCRIPTURE, SONG, READING

1 Corinthians 13:11-12 (CEB)

Becky Dean

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, reason like a child, think like a child. But now that I have become [an adult], I've put an end to childish things. Now we see a reflection in a mirror; then we will see face-to-face. Now I know partially, but then I will know completely in the same way that I have been completely known.

"Beams of Heaven as I Go"

UMH 528

*Refrain:*

*I do not know how long 'twill be,  
nor what the future holds for me,  
but this I know: if Jesus leads me,  
I shall get home someday.*

1. Beams of heaven as I go,  
through the wilderness below,  
guide my feet in peaceful ways,  
turn my midnights into days.  
When in the darkness I would grope,  
faith always sees a star of hope,  
and soon from all life's grief and danger  
I shall be free someday.
2. Burdens now may crush me down,  
disappointments all around;  
troubles speak in mournful sigh,  
sorrow through a tear-stained eye.  
There is a world where pleasure reigns,  
no mourning soul shall roam its plains,  
and to that land of peace and glory  
I shall want to go someday.

*Refrain:*

*I do not know how long 'twill be,  
nor what the future holds for me,  
but this I know: if Jesus leads me,  
I shall get home someday.*

## The Swan

by Rainer Maria Rilke  
Translated by Joanna Macy

This laboring of ours with all that remains undone,  
as if still bound to it,  
is like the lumbering gait of the swan.

And then our dying – releasing ourselves  
from the very ground on which we stood –  
is like the way he hesitantly lowers himself

into the water. It gently receives him,  
and, gladly yielding, flows back beneath him,  
as wave follows wave,  
while he, now wholly serene and sure,  
with regal composure,  
allows himself to glide.

*Refrain:*

*I do not know how long 'twill be,  
nor what the future holds for me,  
but this I know: if Jesus leads me,  
I shall get home someday.*

SERMON

“The Gift of Uncertainty”

Rev. Pamela Kurtz, *Pastor*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

When Pastor says “*Lord,*”

**People Respond: Hear our Prayers**

The Lord’s Prayer - Ecumenical Version (UMH 894)

\*We invite you to use any other name to refer to the Divine with which you are comfortable ~ God, Father, Mother, Creator, etc.

**Our \*Creator in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

OFFERING TIME

OFFERING WORDS

*Oh God, You are my God  
And I will ever praise You  
Oh God, You are my God  
And, I will ever praise You*

*I will seek You in the morning  
And I will learn to  
Walk in Your ways  
And step by step You'll lead me  
And I will follow You all of my days*

## SHARING THE HOLY COMMUNION OF THE BREAD AND CUP

Prayer of Confession and Resolve (*Responsive*):

For giving fear too much face-time,  
**Forgive and restore us, O God.**

For digging in rather than going with the flow,  
**Forgive and restore us, O God.**

For holding on too tight when what we need to do is let go,  
**Forgive and restore us, O God.**

## TIME OF SILENCE FOR PRAYERS OF FORGIVENESS AND HOPE

Assurance of Grace

Hear these words of assurance:

God dwells with us, no matter how sure or unsure we are.

God is not uncertain about whether or not we are worthy of love.

God is with you, forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness. This is the Good News from our God. **People: Thanks be to God! Amen!**

Passing the Peace

As forgiven people living in the midst of the work of Jesus, let us share peace with our siblings in the world.

*(We go to our windows and doors and share with the world: **the peace of Christ be with you!**)*

## GRATITUDE TIMES

# CLOSING SONG

We Are a Wilderness Wandering People

W&S 3113

- 1. We are a wilderness wandering people  
on a journey of the soul.  
May we find our destination  
in our longing to be whole.  
Our Holy God is calling to us  
with Jesus by our side  
may compassion be our compass  
may the Spirit be our Guide.*
- 2. May we cherish all our children,  
let us heal our family's pain.  
Help us cure our city's madness,  
let love and justice reign.  
Reconciled with one another  
in prayer and praise and song,  
we're the body of Christ together  
and we know that we belong,  
we belong, we belong.*

## BENEDICTION *(responsive)*

You have a place in this world; a place where everything comes together in your body and you disappear into a seamless whole. Move with and through those shortcomings that afflict you, and inhabit this world with your fullest self.

May the Spirit of the Living God,  
Made known to us most fully within life's Dark Wood:

**Go before you** to show you the way;  
**Go above you** to watch over you;  
**Go behind you** to push you into places you may not necessarily go yourself;  
**Go beneath you** to uphold and uplift you;  
**Go beside you** to be your strong and constant companion;  
And dwell within you to remind you that you are surely not alone,  
And that you are loved – loved beyond your wildest imagination.  
And may the fire of God's blessing burn brightly upon you, and within you,  
Now and always.  
**Amen.**

## POSTLUDE

There's a Path

*There's a path (there's a path) ... and it leads us out together  
To the wood (to the wood) ... where the darkness hovers still  
We are sent (we are sent) ... and the Spirit goes before us  
God says, "go (God says, go) ... be my presence in the world."*