

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

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March 21, 2021
Fifth Sunday of Lent
Celebration of Divine Worship

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 *[unison]*

**Unexpected Love, enter our lives
and open us to the gifts residing deep within the Holy Darkness of our lives.
Open us to seek your voice from deep within,
for we yearn to feel you moving in us.
In your many names, we pray. Amen.**

OPENING SONG

Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days UMH 269

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|---|--|
| <i>1. Lord, who throughout these forty days,
For us did fast and pray,
Teach us with you to mourn our sins,
And close by you to stay.</i> | <i>3. As you did hunger bear and thirst,
So teach us, gracious Lord,
To die to self, and always live
By your most holy word.</i> |
| <i>2. As you with Satan did contend,
And did the vict'ry win,
O give us strength in you to fight,
In you to conquer sin.</i> | <i>5. Abide with us that when this life
Of suffering is past,
An Easter of unending joy
We may attain at last!</i> |

SONG, SCRIPTURE, and READING

"Spirit, I Have Heard You Calling" by: Thew Elliot

*Spirit, I have heard you calling, like a mem'ry long grown dim,
crying from creation's moment seeking voice from deep within.*

*I have heard you in my longing. I have heard you in my pain.
Now I feel you moving in me, feel you burning like a flame.*

2 Corinthians 5:16-19 (CEB)

David Betts

So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!

All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation.

Mark 1:12-13 (CEB)

At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.

*Now I see you all around me, now I hear you call my name.
Now I speak the words you give me, now I feed creation's flame.
You are speaking through my longing.
You are speaking through my pain.
Now I feel you moving in me, and I'll never be the same.*

"The Spirit beckons us not to be good, but to be human – humble, of the humus – which ultimately means finding your elemental waters, which are connected to God, and living into your fullest energies. You can (and will) do a lot of good by walking the path that brings you most fully alive in this world, but in order to stay on this path, you must learn to say no to doing a great many "good" things."

The Gifts of the Dark Wood, Eric Elnes, 2015, pg. 117

*Since you moved upon my waters, since you spoke and set me free,
I have yearned for this communion, for your fire inside of me!
Now your love defines my longing. Now your love shines through my pain.
Now we dance in endless union, singing out creation's name!*

SERMON

"The Gift of Temptation"

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 OUR GIFTS TO GOD

Offering Words

Thanksgiving Song

Step by Step

W&S 3004

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

HOLY COMMUNION

Prayer of Confession and Resolve (*Responsive*):

For paying more attention to the expected path than the right one,
Forgive and restore us, O God.

For denying our very aliveness out of a misguided self-sacrificing agenda,
Forgive and restore us, O God.

For valuing the safe choices instead of the ones that lead to life,
Forgive and restore us, O God.

TIME OF SILENCE FOR PRAYERS OF FORGIVENESS AND HOPE

Assurance of Grace

Hear these words of assurance:

God desires our fully-alive selves.

God is cheering us on as we discern best choices.

God is with you, forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness.

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!**)*

SHARING THE HOLY COMMUNION OF THE BREAD AND CUP

GRATITUDE TIMES

CLOSING SONG

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

UMH 420

1. *Breathe on me, Breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.*
2. *Breathe on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.*
3. *Breathe on me, Breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
till all this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.*
4. *Breathe on me, Breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.*

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."