



An Inclusive Christian Community  
feeding the spiritual and physical hunger of Oakland.

(510) 465-4793    [www.lakemerrittumc.org](http://www.lakemerrittumc.org)  
1255 First Avenue, Oakland, CA 94606



## The Free Way

**Rev. Sunae Cho, Lead Pastor**  
[pastor@lakemerrittumc.org](mailto:pastor@lakemerrittumc.org)

**Jim Meredith, Music Director**  
[jimmeredith@mac.com](mailto:jimmeredith@mac.com)

**Sean Hyland, Church Operations Manager**  
[office@lakemerrittumc.org](mailto:office@lakemerrittumc.org)

March 22, 2026  
Fifth Sunday in Lent  
CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP

---

**Prelude**

*A Wilderness Wandering People*

Jim Strathdee  
Adapted by Worship Design Studio  
Ken Schoon, cello  
Dr. George Han, violin

**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,  
on The Way,  
on The Way,  
on The Way.**

**Welcome**

Pastor Sunae

**Opening Prayer** (responsive)

Naomi Martin

Leader: God our Rock, be with us on The Way.  
At times we are not sure how we will  
carry the burdens of grief and disappointment  
that accumulate in life.

**People: We come asking for help in lightening the load  
so that we can be free to move in new directions.**

**All: Help us to help each other as Jesus asks us to do. Amen.**

**Opening Song**

(Please stand if able)

***Just a Closer Walk with Thee***  
***TFWS 2158***

***Led by the Men's Prayer Breakfast Singers***

**1. I am weak, but thou art strong;  
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;  
I'll be satisfied as long  
as I walk, let me walk close to thee.**

**Just a closer walk with thee,  
grant it, Jesus, is my plea,  
daily walking close to thee:  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.**

**2. Through this world of toil and snares,  
if I falter, Lord, who cares?  
Who with me my burden shares?  
None but thee, dear Lord, none but thee.**

**Just a closer walk with thee,  
grant it, Jesus, is my plea,  
daily walking close to thee:  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be**

**3. When my feeble life is o'er,  
time for me will be no more;  
guide me gently, safely o'er  
to thy shore, dear Lord, to thy shore.**

**Just a closer walk with thee,  
grant it, Jesus, is my plea,  
daily walking close to thee:  
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be**

## **Children's Moment**

Margaret LeWright

## **Scripture**

*Isaiah 43:16-19 (NIV)*

Naomi Martin

This is what the Lord says—  
he who made a way through the sea,  
a path through the mighty waters,  
who drew out the chariots and horses,  
the army and reinforcements together,  
and they lay there, never to rise again,  
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:  
“Forget the former things;  
do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness  
and streams in the wasteland.

*Philippians 3:12-14 (CEB)*

It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose.

Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus.

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**Sermon**

***The Free Way***

Rev. Jeff Kunkel

**Response**

**Three Empty Crosses**

David Lantz III  
LMUMC Choir

**Prayers & Gratitudes** (organ)

**Jesus, Remember Me**  
**UMH 488**

**Jesus, remember me  
when you come into your kingdom.  
Jesus, remember me  
when you come into your kingdom.**

**The Lord's Prayer Ecumenical Version (UMH 894)**

*\*Please feel free to use the name of your choice for God that speaks to your soul.*

**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 forever. Amen.**

**Passing The Peace Of Christ**

Let us offer one another signs of peace and love.

**Living As the Church**

**Offering & Thanksgiving** (organ)

***How Shall I Come Before the Lord***  
**W&S 3124 vs 1,3**

1. How shall I come before the Lord  
and bow myself with heart outpoured?  
And shall I come with offering?  
What shall I give? What shall I bring?

3. Let justice shine in all your ways.  
Let loving kindness rule your days,  
that, as this earthly path you trod,  
you shall walk humbly with your God.

## Closing Song

(Please stand if able)

### *My Hope Is Built*

UMH 368

1. My hope is built on nothing less  
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.

2. When darkness veils his lovely face,  
I rest on his unchanging grace.  
In every high and stormy gale,  
my anchor holds within the veil.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.

3. His oath, his covenant, his blood  
support me in the whelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way,  
he then is all my hope and stay.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.

4. When he shall come with trumpet sound,  
O may I then in him be found!  
Dressed in his righteousness alone,  
faultless to stand before the throne!

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand;  
all other ground is sinking sand.

## **Closing Prayer** (responsive)

Naomi Martin

Leader: The Creator God filled you with breath,  
inviting you to this journey called Life.

**All: We will follow on The Way.**

Leader: Jesus, our Guide, showed us what it means  
to make a new way with Love.

**All: We will follow on The Way.**

Leader: The Spirit gives us strength to move forward  
with Courage and Compassion for all we meet.

**All: We will follow on The Way.**

Leader: May this week be filled with  
opportunities to choose to let go  
of those things that no longer serve you,  
and be on the lookout for ways  
to encourage the same in those you meet.

**All: May it be so. Amen.**

## **Postlude**

All Creatures of Our God and King

Geistliche Kirchengesänge, 1623  
arr. Mark Hayes