



First Congregational United Church of Christ February 18, 2024



First Sunday in Lent

Partners in Ministry: All who are a part of this church

Pastor: **Rev. Enno K. Limvere**

Musician: **Francie Beaster** Choir Director: **Ann Russ**

Peace Candle Lighter: **Byron Aldrich** Liturgist: **Barb Bottger**

Greeter: **Bruce Tyler** Usher:

Coffee-Hour Host: **Jenny Delfs**

Photo by Ian Macharia

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Gathering Music
Words of Welcome
Prelude

Words to Enter Worship (based upon Psalm 19)

People who follow the commandments: **The heavens herald your glory, O God, and the skies display your handiwork. Day after day they tell their story, night after night they reveal the depth of their understanding.**

People who love their neighbor: **Without speech, without words, without even an audible voice, their cry echoes through all the world, and their message reaches to the end of the earth.**

People who care for the poor: **It comes forth with the grandeur of a wedding procession, with the eagerness of an athlete ready to race. It rises at one end of the sky and travels to the other end, and nothing escapes its warmth.**

People who follow Jesus: **May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing in you sight, O LORD, my rock and redeemer!**

Opening Hymn #66 O Day of Radiant Gladness ([click here](#))

Words of Lament

Amazing God, we lift up the continent of Africa with 54 countries, 1.4 billion people, and consisting of 20% of all land area in the world. It remains the poorest continent for average income but one of the richest in minerals and resources. Despite its rich and grand history, we know it through the lens of Tarzan, an uncivilized place filled with savages. We blame them for their corruption, poverty, and lack of education, even as we continue to exploit their people and their resources for our comfort and wealth. Slavery continues today to provide us with resources such as oil, cobalt, and nickel, among others. O God of Justice, balance the scales that frees the people, returns the rights and riches to their countries, and places the foundation of ubuntu in our world. Amen.

Time of Silence

Words of Poetry & Lighting the Candle of Peace

It is a custom in our congregation to light our Peace Candle during worship, as a witness to the Prince of Peace and our communal intention to be peacemakers as a Just Peace Church.

The Spirit Of Ubuntu

by Michael Theophilus Masimbira (May 2017)

Lost is the African pride
Gone are those who could ride the tide
Left are those who drown beneath the wave
Prone to dehumanization because of greed

I see burning buildings
Mutilated bodies
Escalating violence
And social unrest

Lost is the Spirit of Ubuntu
Left is a society deprived of its integrity
Selfishness and poverty is at the core of our society
Is the real Africa lost to antiquity?

Crime is rife as people strive for a decent life.
A decent life earned through decadence
Should we stone foreigners because the government is failing to provide
employment?
Or should we burn down buildings so that our voices can be heard?

I am ashamed of the profanity we breed
It's a calamity for us to be xenophobic
It's a taboo for us to call Africans foreigners in their motherland.
It's not who they are.
It's not who we are
It's not who you are
It's not who I am

Together we are the Africa that has survived slave trade
The Africa that has survived apartheid
The Africa that has survived colonization
The Africa that is surviving westernization
We don't fight for employment
We create employment
We don't breed resentment
We translate sentiments

Let us evoke the Spirit of Ubuntu
And let's behave like men not animals
Let us ignite the Spirit of Ubuntu
And let's stand like men immortal
The Spirit of Ubuntu is what separates us from animals
Terrorism shouldn't exist in Africa
It's a disgrace for us to be unethical
Xenophobia shouldn't be heard in Africa
Animosity is not our portion

Passing of the Peace

Hymn #202 O God, How We Have Wandered ([click here](#))

Scripture Reading – Mark 10:17-31

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” **18** Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. **19** You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.’ ” **20** He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” **21** Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own,

and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” **22** When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” **24** And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! **25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” **26** They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” **27** Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.” **28** Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” **29** Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news **30** who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. **31** But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Children’s Message Moose and Needles

Choir Abundant Life by Ruth Duck

Message Selling Out

Musical Reflections

Communion Hymn #347 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

Communion

Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, Mother God, you are in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen

News of God at Work in our Congregation & Community

Our Time of Giving

Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God, for all that love has done.

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen

Closing Hymn #576 For the Healing of the Nations ([click here](#))

Benediction

Sending Music



Opening Hymn #66 O Day of Radiant Gladness

1. O day of radiant gladness, O day of joy and light;
O balm of care and sadness, most beautiful, most bright;
This day the high and lowly, through ages joined in tune,
sing "Holy, holy, holy" to the great God triune.

2. This day at the creation the light first had its birth;
this day for our salvation Christ rose from depths of earth;
This day our God victorious the Spirit sent from heaven,
and thus this day most glorious a triple light was given.

3. This day God's people, meeting, the Holy Scripture hear;
Christ's living presence greeting, through bread and cup made near.
We journey on, believing, renewed with heavenly might,
from grace more grace receiving on this blessed day of light.

4. That light our hope sustaining, upon the pilgrim way,
at length our rest attaining, our endless Sabbath day.
We sing to you our praises, our Hope, our Joy, our Sun:
the church its voice upraises to you, blessed Three in One.

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[return to bulletin](#)

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Hymn #202 O God, How We Have Wandered

1. O God, how we have wandered and hidden from your face;
In foolishness have squandered your legacy of grace.
But how, in exile dwelling, we turn with fear and shame,
As distant but compelling, you call us each by name.

2. And now at length discerning the evil that we do,
By faith we are returning with hope and trust in you.
In haste you come to meet us, and home rejoicing bring,
In gladness there to greet us with calf and robe and ring.

3. O god of all the living, both banished and restored,
Compassionate, forgiving, our peace and hope assured.
Grant now that our transgressing, our faithlessness may cease.
Stretch out your hand in blessing, in pardon, and in grace.

return to bulletin

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Closing Hymn #576 **For the Healing of the Nations**

1. For the healing of the nations, God we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords;
to a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.
2. Lead us forward into freedom; from despair your world release,
that redeemed from war and hatred, all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness fear will die and hope increase.
3. All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned;
pride of status, race, or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.
4. You, Creator God, have written your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind,
that by our response and service earth its destiny may find.

[return to bulletin](#)

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