

*A Service of
Remembrance
and
Hope*

MARCH 10, 2021

7 P.M.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
444 EAST BROAD STREET • COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215

A SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AND HOPE

With more than 527,000 dead in this country from COVID-19, and more than 2.5 million around the world, this pandemic has forced so many of us into the grief and pain of loss. This grief is profound and it is palpable. Too, many people are suffering the anguish of broken relationships; the insecurity of employment and unemployment; the exhaustion of ill health; the hurting of solitude; the loss of a parent; the unimaginable loss of a child; the loneliness of no longer having a beloved spouse to share each day; the loss of a sibling, the loss of a dear friend; the loss of their beloved family pet and loyal companion; the loss of so many lives to the global pandemic that plagues us; all of which can contribute to a feeling of being heavy hearted as we try to retain and regain some sense of normalcy.

During these times we need to make the space and take the time to acknowledge our sadness and concern. There is comfort in knowing we are not alone. For all these reasons, we invite you participate and join in sharing prayers, Scripture, and music. Please join us for this special service to feel God's presence in your time of darkness and to be comforted knowing that you are not alone, and that God's Word is ever-present to shine light into our lives.

We pray that you will find hope and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

We gather in silence. At the sound of a bell, the service begins.

PRELUDE

There is a balm in Gilead

Spiritual

GATHERING

Leader: Come to us this night, O God.

People: Come to us with light.

L: Speak to us this night, O God.

P: Speak to us your truth.

L: Dwell with us this night, O God.

P: Dwell with us in love.

WELCOME

CONFESSION OF OUR NEED FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD

L: We gather here in your presence, God.

P: In our need and bringing with us the needs of the world.

L: We come to you, for you come to us in Jesus.

P: And you know by experience what human life is like.

L: We come with our faith and with our doubts.

P: We come with our hopes and our fears.

L: We come as we are, because you invite us to come.

P: And you have promised to never turn us away.

L: Faithful God, in times of sorrow you are our comfort. When we find ourselves in need, you provide. In this season of separation you have held us together. By your Spirit renew our strength and give us the words of eternal life to offer hope to a suffering world, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

L: O God, our refuge and strength, meet us in our sorrow and lift up our eyes to the peace and light of your constant care. Help us so to hear your word of grace that our fears may be dispelled by your love, and our loneliness eased by your presence, as, together with those whom we remember this day, we wait in hope for the coming of your realm in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

MUSIC

Pie Jesu (Requiem)

Gabriel Fauré

LITANY OF LOSS AND FRAGILITY

L: We gather in the name the Triune God who brings hope and centeredness in the fragility and brokenness of our world.

The first candle is lighted.

L: Gracious God: you are the love that created the world; you are the light which shines in the dark; you are the one who is here with us now.

P: May the love of Christ embrace all as one.

The second candle is lighted.

L: Holy God: there are times when we cannot feel your love; times when we struggle to see your light, times when you seem absent and we feel empty.

P: Refresh, restore, renew us, O God, and lead us into your future.

The third candle is lighted.

L: Loving God: where the pain is raw, send relief; when fear paralyzes, pour out peace; where anger festers, have mercy; when doubts overwhelm, hold us fast.

P: Let us remember that dawn defeats darkness.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE

Lamentations 3:21–26

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 130

L: Out of the depths I have called to you, Lord,
let your ears be open to hear my voice.

P: All my hope is in God’s word.

L: If you recorded all our sins
who could come before you?

P: All my hope is in God’s word.

L: There is forgiveness with you:
therefore you shall be feared.

P: All my hope is in God’s word.

L: My soul is longing for the Lord,
more than those who watch for daybreak.

P: All my hope is in God’s word.

L: O Israel, wait for the Lord,
for with the Lord there is mercy.

P: All my hope is in God’s word.

L: Praise to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: All my hope is in God’s word.

THE EPISTLE

Romans 8:31–39

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.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 11:28–30

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

MUSIC

"If God Be For Us" (Messiah)

G.F. Handel

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Drawn together in the compassion of God, let us now pray for the Church, the world, and all who are in need:

Gracious God, you uphold us when we are in need of faith. We pray for all people and leaders of all faiths. As we pray for religious communities throughout the world, we ask, Lord, that you will uphold them, making them places of hospitality, welcome, and compassion, especially for the lonely, the grieving and those who are suffering most in this pandemic.

Lord, in your mercy:

hear our prayer.

Creator God, the heights of the heavens show us the vastness of your steadfast love. We pray for people in parts of the world where there is any kind of distress, strife or political instability. We continue to remember those places where COVID-19 infections are rising, and especially parts of this country under local lockdown or new restrictions. Lord, have compassion on your creation, and where there is hopelessness, damage and destruction, bring hope, healing, renewal and redemption to your world.

Lord, in your mercy:

hear our prayer.

Gracious God, you make your ways known to all peoples. We pray for all the leaders of the nations, and all who hold any kind of authority in this and in all lands. Grant to them, O Lord, the gifts of discernment, wisdom and compassion that their service may be marked by integrity and directed towards promoting the common good.

Lord, in your mercy:

hear our prayer.

Creator God, you are unfailing in showing us your generosity and love. We pray for our friends, our families and our local communities. We give thanks for the work of all caregivers and health workers, for all volunteers who help those unable to help themselves. Lord, may we all come to experience in our hearts the promise of your eternal grace.

Lord, in your mercy:

hear our prayer.

Compassionate God, we pray for the sick, especially those gravely ill with COVID-19 at home, in hospitals or in our nursing homes. As we pray for an end to the current pandemic, we ask that the Spirit may bring healing to those who are ill, and protection for those who are vulnerable. In a few moments of silence, we remember before you all for whom we would wish to pray at this time. Lord, grant that they may find consolation through Christ's healing presence.

Lord, in your mercy:

hear our prayer.

Merciful God, nothing can ever separate us from your constant love for us in Christ. We remember before you all those who have died and those who are bereaved by their passing, especially those whom we now bring before you. Grant, Lord, that they may share in the joys of eternal life.

Lord, in your mercy:
hear our prayer.

God of all ages, we give you thanks for the whole company of your saints in glory, with whom in fellowship we join our prayers and praises; by your grace may we, like them, be made perfect in your eternal love. Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power, be to our God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

OFFERING OF PRAYERS AND ANOINTING

L: The ministry of Jesus invites us to new life in God and with each other. In the laying on of hands and anointing we proclaim the Good News that God desires us to be healthy and one in the body of Christ. You are invited to offer yourself, whatever your sickness of spirit, mind, or body, and ask for healing and wholeness in the Name of the holy and undivided Trinity.

L: Let us pray. Gracious God, source of all healing, in Jesus Christ you heal the sick and mend the broken. We bless you for this oil pressed from the fruits of the earth, given to us as a sign of healing and forgiveness, and of the fullness of life you give. By your Spirit, come upon all who receive this ministry of compassion that they may know your healing touch and be made whole, to the glory of Jesus Christ our redeemer. **Amen.**

During this time, Ministers virtually anoint you with oil as a sign of healing. We also light votive candles as remembrances or prayers. We invite you to observe this prayer space at home and light a candle or candles for your prayers, concerns, sadnesses, wishes, and hopes.

MUSIC DURING ANOINTING

Come to me, O weary traveler

Austin

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan
Music: William P. Rowan

CLOSING PRAYER

L: Let us pray.

P: Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying and soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE

Come to me, O weary traveler

You are invited to depart in silence.

LEADERSHIP

Liturgists: The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens

The Rev. Emily Krause Corzine

Mark S. Williams

Music: Kevin Jones, *pianist*; Melissa Lawson, *soloist*

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*We invite you to join us on YouTube or Facebook for worship during
Lent, Holy Week, and Easter*

Lenten Sunday Worship at 9 and 11 a.m.

March 14

March 21

www.first-church.org/watchourservices.aspx

Services of Holy Week

March 28 - Palm/Passion Sunday at 11 a.m.

March 28 - “King of Kings” at 4 p.m.

Organist Clark Wilson accompanies Cecil B. DeMille’s epic silent film on the Kimball organ.

www.concertsatfirstchurch.org/webcasts

March 31 - A Service of Tenebrae at 7:30 p.m.

April 1 - Maundy Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

April 2 - The Solemn Liturgy for Good Friday at 7:30 p.m.

www.first-church.org/specialservices.aspx

April 4 - Easter Day at 11 a.m.

www.first-church.org/watchourservices.aspx

Welcome Statement

You are welcomed, affirmed, and loved here; our faith informs us that you are a child of a loving God. Your characteristics and gifts will enrich our congregation. In this community, you will be celebrated, embraced, and honored, no matter how you identify or how your identity may evolve. Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

First Church is a Faith Community

† Called together by God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, to worship, pray and serve;

† Led by Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior, to learn the faith and welcome all God's children;

† Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God's image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, called to unite all people in God's love. We are a community seeking God's presence and love in our lives. We seek to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures, mental, intellectual and physical conditions, economic circumstances, political, theological and faith backgrounds. Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

—Adopted September 8, 2002 by the congregation
Revisions adopted January 27, 2019 by the congregation



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,



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