



# The United Church of Bethel

An Open, Affirming Congregation of the UCC/UUA

March 14<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday in Lent, 2021

Tom Harty – Pastor

Becky Kondi- Keyboard & Vocals, Larry Noble – Guitar & Vocals,

Seth Stoddard Technical Director

♠= Please Stand If you Are Able

All Prayers and Service Music are Found in the Folders in the Music Racks

## Centering & Prelude

## Welcome and Announcements

## Introit

## Greeting and Responsive Call to Worship

L The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**P And also with you.**

L Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

**It is right to give him thanks and praise**

Beloved in Christ,

why have you come to worship this morning?

**We come to celebrate the love of God**

**in the form of Jesus Christ.**

This love reaches through the shadows of our lives to embrace us.

Our challenge is to trust the light of God's love in the midst of our struggles.

**We come to celebrate the light of God in Jesus**

**who offers love and acceptance,**

**not judgment and rejection.**

If only we will trust, Jesus leads us in the way of light and love.

**We come to celebrate our God who loved and loves us so much!**

## Invocation and Lord's Prayer

♠ Hymn NCH 419 Now Thank We All Our God

## **Prayer of Confession**

O God of Comfort and God of Challenge,  
we come to you this morning the way the Israelites did,  
full of complaints and dissatisfaction.  
Nothing is enough;  
we do not recognize your blessing at work in our day to day lives.

**Forgive us.**

In our complaints, challenge us as you did the Israelites,  
to consider the bigger picture  
of oppression, injustice, and inequality around us.

**Forgive us when we close our eyes  
for fear of what you might show us;**

Lift up loving and compassionate leaders  
to open our eyes until we see what you see in our world.

## **Assurance of Pardon**

You are blessed because God's image resides deep within each of you.  
So return God's blessing by the way you love others.

## **Passing of the Peace**

**Numbers 21: 4-9**

**Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22**

*Refrain: Consider the steadfast love of God*

✦ **Gloria Patri**

**Ephesians 2: 1-10**

**Choral Anthem**

✦ **Gospel John 3: 14-21**

✦ **Hymn NCH 547 Amazing Grace**

**Sermon**

**Joys and Concerns**

**Pastoral Prayer**

*Choral Response: Hear Our Prayer O Lord.*

**Offering**

✦ **Doxology & Prayer of Dedication**

✦ **Hymn NCH 596 Rock of Ages**

✦ **Choral Benediction**

**Postlude**

(Please remain seated for a period of quiet meditation and  
appreciation for the music our worship team provides.)

*Whoever you are, Wherever you are on life's journey, You are welcome here.*

*Our Faith is 2000 Years Old; Our Thinking is Not.*

## First Reading

### Numbers 21:4–9

<sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

## PSALM

### 107:1–3, 17–22

#### **R: Consider the steadfast love of God**

1 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,  
those he redeemed from trouble

3 and gathered in from the lands,  
from the east and from the west,  
from the north and from the south.

#### **R: Consider the steadfast love of God**

17 Some were sick through their sinful ways,  
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;

18 they loathed any kind of food,  
and they drew near to the gates of death.

19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress;

20 he sent out his word and healed them,  
and delivered them from destruction.

21 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,

for his wonderful works to humankind.

22 And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,  
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

### **R: Consider the steadfast love of God**

### **Epistle Reading** **Ephesians 2:1–10**

<sup>1</sup> You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not the result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

### **Gospel Reading** **John 3:14–21**

<sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.

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