



The United Church of Bethel

An Open, Affirming Congregation of the UCC/UUA

February 28th, 2021

Tom Harty – Pastor

Becky Kondi- Keyboard & Vocals, Larry Nobile – 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

“Walk before me, and be blameless,” said God to Abram,

“And I shall make my covenant between me and you.” (Genesis 17: 1-2, paraphrased)

Quite openly, we’ve measured that distance.

Quite openly, we’ve stayed away.

Quite openly, we’ve distanced ourselves.

Quite openly, we didn’t want to be closer.

Quite openly, we are not blameless.

Quite openly, we are here.

We are here to open ourselves
to our In-between God.

Invocation and Lord’s Prayer

✠ **Hymn NCH 211 Lord Jesus Who Through Forty Days**

Prayer of Confession

We are quite open about our successes.

**We feel free to boast when we have done well,
but we are not quite so open when things have gone wrong.**

We do not praise God anyway.

Instead, we recognize the distance
between me and you
between you and God
between God and me.
as we open ourselves

**Let's be quite open about it
to our Living God in silence extended prayerful silence.**

Assurance Of Pardon

You can look behind.
You can search ahead.
God will meet you in between.
God promises to always be right there.
If you believe this to be so,
If you believe God is
between here and there
between me and you,
Share that peace with your neighbor

Passing of the Peace

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalm 22: 23-31

Refrain

O God do not be far away O God do not be far away

✠ Gloria Patri

Romans 4: 13-25

Choral Anthem

✠ Gospel Mark 8: 31-38

✠ Hymn NCH 569 Touch the Earth Lightly

Sermon

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Choral Response: Hear Our Prayer O Lord.

Offering

✠ Doxology & Prayer of Dedication

✠ Hymn NCH 391 In the Midst of New Dimensions

✠ 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

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." 3 Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

15 God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Psalm

22: 23-31

r: O God do not be far away O God do not be far away

You who fear the LORD, praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

24 For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.

r: O God do not be far away O God do not be far away

25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.

May your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.

28 For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

r: O God do not be far away O God do not be far away

29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.

30 Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,

31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

r: O God do not be far away O God do not be far away

Epistle Reading

Romans 4:13–25

13 The promise to Abraham and to his descendants, that he would inherit the world, didn't come through the Law but through the righteousness that comes from faith. 14 If they inherit because of the Law, then faith has no effect and the promise has been canceled. 15 The Law brings about wrath. But when there isn't any law, there isn't any violation of the law. 16 That's why the inheritance comes through faith, so that it will be on the basis of God's grace. In that way, the promise is secure for all of Abraham's descendants, not just for those who are related by Law but also for those who are related by the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us. 17 As it is written: I have appointed you to be the father of many nations. So Abraham is our father in the eyes of God in whom he had faith, the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that don't exist into existence. 18 When it was beyond hope, he had faith in the hope that he would become the father of many nations, in keeping with the promise God spoke to him: That's how many descendants you will have. 19 Without losing faith, Abraham, who was nearly 100 years old, took into account his own body, which was as good as dead, and Sarah's womb, which was dead. 20 He didn't hesitate with a lack of faith in God's promise, but he grew strong in faith and gave glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that God was able to do what he promised. 22 Therefore, it was credited to him as righteousness.

23 But the scripture that says it was credited to him wasn't written only for Abraham's sake. 24 It was written also for our sake, because it is going to be credited to us too. It will be credited to those of us who have faith in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25 He was handed over because of our mistakes, and he was raised to meet the requirements of righteousness for us.

Gospel Reading

Mark 8:31–38

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

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