

Second Sunday in Lent

March 5, 2023

United Church of Christ, Neillsville

Pastor James Mohr

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PRELUDE *"Pavane"* Gabriel Faure'
Karen Mohr

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: From the safety and comfort of home, God called Abram to go from all he knew to embrace a future yet to be revealed.

All: "Go from," God says, and our hesitant hearts place one foot in front of the other to trust God with the unknown.

Liturgist: By night, Nicodemus came seeking greater insight into the teachings of God for the journey set before him. Jesus called him out of the shadows and towards a life born anew.

All: "Go towards" God says, and a new life awaits us. We reach towards a God who has not come to condemn the world but to offer a salve that can heal all wounds.

Liturgist: We fear the unknown and that which we lack in understanding. "How can this be?" we proclaim with Nicodemus. And yet, God's call is one that urges us to go with our whole self into that unknowing, trusting that God will provide a way.

All: Love calls us forth into lives of transformation, born anew into new paths of faith. Though we do not know where we are going, God has promised to never leave us alone. Let us worship the One who will show us the way.

HYMN *"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"*
#25 NCH vs. 1-4 Isaac Watts

**1 Our God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home:**

**2 Under the shadow of your throne
your saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is your arm alone,
and our defense is sure.**

**3 Before the hills in order stood
or earth received its frame,
From everlasting you are God,
to endless years the same.**

**4 A thousand ages in your sight
are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION (All)

God of calls and courage, you draw us towards your loving embrace even as we face what seems like impossibility. We experience heartache and grief, injustice and cruelty, fear and anxiety as daily teachers on this path of faith. As you call us to go into an uncertain and unknown future, O God, grant us the courage needed to let go of all that we have known so that we can take hold of the new life you are bringing about even now. Though we may not know where we are going, God, your way is revealed moment by moment, step by step, and breath by breath. In the name of the One who so loves the world we pray. Amen.

PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE

Liturgist: O God, we all too often wish to go our own way, maintain control, and rely on our own strength rather than trust that you will provide. Forgive us in our unwillingness to live by faith or to not trust you with providing all that we need for the journey.

All: May God's mercy surround our weaknesses with grace for restoring us to hope everlasting.

WORDS OF GRACE/ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE

Liturgist: Friends, the call of God does not leave us isolated and condemned on a road of uncertainty, fear, and mistakes made. God's unending love and compassion is for all whose burdens are heavy and whose weary journey brings tears. May the tender arms of God carry you forth in strength.

All: God has not come to condemn, but to offer a healing salve for our wounds. We welcome God's healing and salvation through Jesus Christ. Amen.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

All are invited to greet one another with such words as "The peace of Christ be with you, and the response: "And also with you."

ACT OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

(last verse of hymn #25)

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Still be our God while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

CHILDREN'S TIME

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Genesis 12:1-4a

12Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' ⁴Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

13 For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

John 3:1-17

3Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' ⁹Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

11 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

16 '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.

17 '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.

SERMON "All Through the Night" Pastor Jim

HYMN "Blessed Assurance"

#473 NCH Fanny Crosby

**1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood.**

Refrain:

**This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.**

**2 Perfect submission, perfect delight!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
[Refrain]**

**3 Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blessed;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with God's goodness, lost in
Christ's love. [Refrain]**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY (Pastor)

Gracious and Giving God, you have called us to give of our resources so that others may experience the new life you are inviting us into. Let our gifts be for the birthing of new life in our local community, in the global community, and in our faith community. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING (All)

O God who calls us to go out into the world with generosity, may these gifts call us from our lives of comfort and towards a faith journey that embraces your love, justice, and compassion for a world in need of your healing. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation

Communion Prayer

Words of Institution

Consecration of the Elements

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving (All)

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior's presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ's body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

HYMN "Abide with Me"

#99 NCH

Henry Lyte

**1 Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The shadows deepen, Lord, with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Christ who changes not, abide with me.

3 I need your presence every passing hour.
What but your grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like yourself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

4 I fear no foe, with you at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? where, grave, your victory?
I triumph still if you abide with me.

5 Hold now your cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Christ, abide with me.

BENEDICTION

Liturgist: Friends, go forth with the courage of God to guide you into those places of restlessness and uncertainty.

For we are called to go...

From our places of comfort.

From our certainties and complacency.

From our old life and into the new.

May the call of God not just call us from but toward a love so compelling that we are willing to trust our whole self into the embrace of the Creator, into the abiding love of Christ, and into the sacred dance of the Holy Spirit.

All: We go forth in the peace of Christ. Amen!

POSTLUDE

JOYS AND CONCERNS

*Parts of this service were written by Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott who serves as the Conference Minister for the Indiana Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ and resides in Indianapolis, Indiana.

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
We are glad that you have joined us in-person, through the internet or on the radio.
We pray that you will hear God's call, seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RADIO BROADCAST

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast on WCCN
98.5FM and 1370AM**

Youtube for March 5, 2023

<https://youtu.be/o5Q3Wf1pBGk>

**This week's radio broadcast
is sponsored by
"a faithful listener".**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Monday, March 6th –
9 AM Card Making**

**Tuesday, March 7th –
1 PM – Bible Study – 510 W 14th Street
*every week at Marge Goetsch's home**

**4-6 PM – UCC Care Team Training
(contact Pastor Jim, Paul Vine or Barb Petkovsek)**

**Wednesday, March 8th –
Lenten Services at Calvary
6 PM soup supper 7 PM Worship**

**Thursday, March 9th –
1:30 PM – Circle of Friends Meeting**

Hosting Coffee Fellowship for March

March 5 – Clarkson's

March 12 –

March 19 – H & K Mathis

March 26 – Vine & Burch

Please sign up on bulletin board/ rear of church