

The prodigal SOUL



god loves all equally,
despite their sins



Laura



PARABLES

LENT 2024



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, CONGREGATIONAL

217 E. Liberty St. Medina, Ohio 44256 330-725-4559 www.uccmedina.org

*****Assisted Listening Devices Available – Please Ask Your Usher*****

LIVE STREAMING OF THE SANCTUARY SERVICE IS AVAILABLE AT UCCMEDINA.ORG

- During the 10:30 service, Jesus Vibes Sunday School is available for ages 3-8th grade

“WELCOMING, LOVING, SERVING, WHERE GOD HAS NO LIMITS”

Please take a moment to sign the attendance pads, (located at the end of each pew) so that you know who is worshipping near you and you may greet them by name.

**Those who are able please stand*

RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE “What Wondrous Love Is This” – arr. Teresa Wilhelmi

Cathy Fafrak, Piano

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

*OPENING HYMN

“What Wondrous Love Is This”

Appalachian Folk Tune

WONDROUS LOVE 12.9.12.12.9



1. What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what
2. When I was sink-ing down, sink-ing down, sink-ing down, when
3. To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing, to
4. And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on, and



won-drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is
I was sink-ing down, sink-ing down; when I was sink-ing
God and to the Lamb I will sing! To God and to the
when from death I'm free, I'll sing on! And when from death I'm



this that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my
down be - neath God's righ-teous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my
Lamb, who is the great "I AM," while mil-lions join the theme, I will
free, I'll sing and joy - ful be, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing



soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul!
soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul!
sing, I will sing, while mil-lions join the theme, I will sing!
on, I'll sing on, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on!

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (A Celtic Call to Worship, found <https://woodlandnash.org/2019/04/25/celtic-service-of-worship/>)

Welcome to this ancient place.

House of prayer for many people; Home to all who come.

Welcome to this gathering place.

Friend and stranger, saint and sinner in all who gather here.

Come with hope or hesitation; come with joy or yearning;

all who hunger, all who thirst for life in all its fullness.

Generous God and generous Saviour, teach us through your Spirit.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Celtic Prayer" – Gary Brubaker

Alleluia Ringers

SCRIPTURE Luke 15:11-32 (N.T. pg. 73)

Pete Metzloff, Liturgist

MESSAGE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY OF GOD

Stacie Yates

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.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Joys and Concerns, Pastoral Prayer

SERMON "The Prodigal Son"

Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

REFLECTION HYMN

"Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult"

Cecil F. Alexander, 1852

GALILEE 8.7.8.7.
William H. Jude, 1874



1. Je - sus calls us o'er the tu - mult of our
2. Long a - go a - pos - tles heard it by the
3. Je - sus calls us from the wor - ship of the
4. In our joys and in our sor - rows, days of
5. Je - sus calls us! By thy mer - cies, Sav - ior,



1. life's wild rest - less sea, day by day his sweet voice
2. Gal - i - le - an lake, turned from home, and toil, and
3. vain world's gold - en store, from each i - dol that would
4. toil and hours of ease, still he calls, in cares and
5. may we hear thy call, give our hearts to thine o -



1. sound - eth, say - ing, "Chris - tian, fol - low me";
2. kin - dred, leav - ing all for his dear sake.
3. keep us, say - ing, "Chris - tian, love me more."
4. plea - sures, "Chris - tian, love me more than these."
5. be - dience, serve and love thee best of all.

OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

There is an offering plate if you feel led to deposit your envelope or an offering there. You can also give through our Realm app or get the link to give by texting UCCMEDINA to 73256. Thank you for your prayerful consideration!

Offertory Invitation

Holy Spirit, Breath of life –

Lord forgive us.

Let us confess in silence our faults and admit our frailty. Before God, with the people of God, we confess to our brokenness; to the ways we wound our lives, to the lives of others, and the life of the world.

May God forgive us, Christ renew us, and the Spirit enable us to grow in love.

Let us, the children of God, greet each other with signs of peace, peace of Christ to you!

Amen! Let us rise in body or spirit and sing out our praise to God!

***Doxology** (words, Ruth Duck, ©2005, GIA Publications)

Praise God, the Source of life and birth; Praise God, the Word, who came to earth;

Praise God, the Spirit, holy flame; All glory, honor to God's Name! Amen.

***Dedication** (from Iona Community)

You, the God whose name is love, want us to be like you – to love the loveless and the unlovely, and the unlovable; to love without jealousy or design or threat, and most difficult of all, to love ourselves. So, thank you...for the loving time. And in all this you keep us, through hard questions with no easy answers; through failing where we hoped to succeed and making an impact when we felt useless; through the patience and the dreams and the love of others; and through Jesus Christ and his Spirit, you keep us. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN**

"My Song Is Love Unknown"

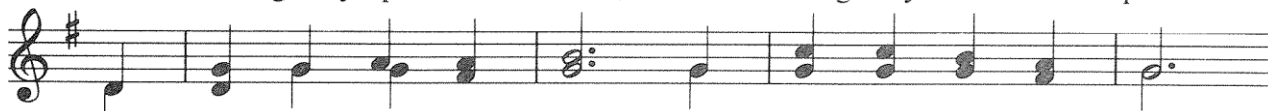
RHOSYMEDRE 6.6.6.6.8.8.8.

Samuel Crossman, 1664, alt.

John D. Edwards, c. 1840



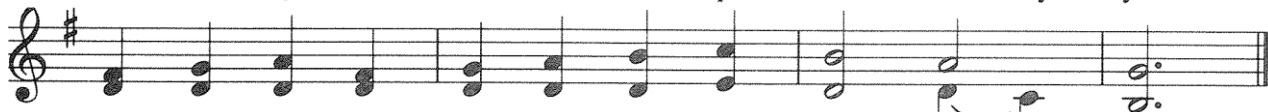
1 My song is love un - known, my Sav - ior's love to me,
2 God left the rich - est throne sal - va - tion to be - stow;
3 Some - times they threw down palms and sweet - est prais - es sang.
4 What has my Sov - ereign done? What makes this rage and spite?
5 I sing my plain be - lief, one song my heart out - pours:



Love to the love - less shown, that they might love - ly be.
But Christ as flesh and bone the world re - fused to know.
Ho - san - nas and glad psalms through streets and mar - kets rang.
Christ gave new strength to run, re - stored the gift of sight.
Nev - er was pain nor grief, nev - er was love like yours.



O who am I, that for my sake my God should take frail
But, O my Friend, my Friend in - deed, who at my need did
Then "Cru - ci - fy!" is all their breath, for blood and death they
Sweet in - ju - ries! Yet they at these them - selves dis - please, and
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could



flesh and die? My God should take frail flesh and die?
life ex - pend; who at my need did life ex - pend.
thirst and cry; for blood and death they thirst and cry.
'gainst Christ rise; them - selves dis - please, and 'gainst Christ rise.
glad - ly spend; I all my days could glad - ly spend.

***BENEDICTION** (Adapted from St. Patrick’s Breastplate Prayer and found here:
<https://acollectionofprayers.com/2016/07/19/blessing-from-st-patricks-breastplate/>)

May the strength of God pilot us.
May the power of God preserve us.
May the wisdom of God instruct us.
May the hand of God protect us.
May the way of God direct us.
May the shield of God defend us.
May the host of God guard us
against the snares of evil
and the temptations of the world.
May Christ be with us.
Christ before us.
Christ in us.
Christ over us.
May your salvation, O Lord,
be always ours
this day and forever more. Amen!

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE “God Be with You”**
God be with you ‘til we meet again; By His counsels guide uphold you;
With His sheep securely fold you; God be with you ‘til we meet again.

***POSTLUDE “Praise the Lord on High” – Rachel Sawyer** Cathy Fafrak, organ

“MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY”

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****Please join us for Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall following the service****
Coffee Hour is hosted this week by Maureen Walker & Michelle Doyle

****** If you would like to host a coffee hour, please sign up in the East Room Hallway******
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Jack Sharpe, Maintenance & Custodian

HOLY WEEK & EASTER WORSHIP

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PALM SUNDAY

March 24th

Palm parade at all 3 worship services, 8:15, 9:00 & 10:30 a.m.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

“LOVE ONE ANOTHER”

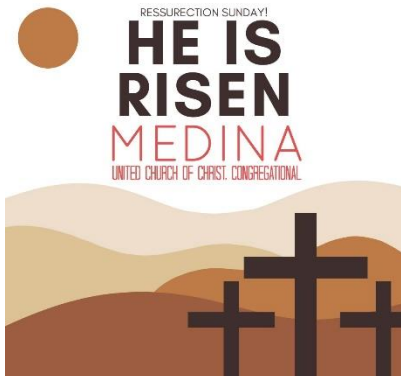
March 28th

Worship service will be at 7 pm in the Sanctuary.

GOOD FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY

March 29th

Come to either class at 2 or 7 PM! Jesus' crucifixion is a central part of Christianity, but why Jesus died is anything but simple to explain. Did Jesus die as a scapegoat (Scapegoat Theory)? Did Jesus die to appease the Father's wrath (Penal Substitutionary Atonement Theory)? Did Jesus die as a demonstration of love for us to follow (Moral Exemplar Theory)? Atonement theories try to make sense of Jesus' death and explain salvation in different ways. We'll survey the major atonement theories and their strengths and weaknesses in explaining salvation.



EASTER SUNDAY WORSHIP

March 31st

7:00 am – **Sunrise Service**
at Spring Grove Cemetery Chapel
8:15 am – **UCC Chapel**
9:00 am – **Fellowship Hall**
10:30 am – **Sanctuary (Livestreamed)**

11:30 am – **Easter Egg Hunt**

THE PILGRIM MESSENGER

MARCH 17, 2024

**“WELCOMING, LOVING, SERVING, WHERE GOD HAS NO LIMITS.
MORE THAN CHURCH ON SUNDAY!”**

Live streaming of the Sanctuary service is available at www.uccmedina.org/live

March 17 thru March 24, 2024
WEEK AT A GLANCE

Sun **5th SUNDAY OF LENT**
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:45 am Children's Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
11:30 am 3rd Grade Bible Class
11:30 am Hospitality Team Meeting
4:30 pm Youth Group

Mon 1:00 pm Breadmakers
6:30 pm Women's Bible Study

Tues

Wed 10:30 am Quilters
6:00 pm Gathering Band Rehearsal
7:00 pm Short Stories By Jesus Study
 @ UCC

Thurs 6:15 pm Bell Choir Rehearsal
7:00 pm Congregational Council
7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Fri

Sat

Sun **PALM SUNDAY/6th SUNDAY OF LENT**
8:15 am Chapel Worship
9:00 am Gathering Worship
9:45 am Children's Choir Rehearsal
10:30 am Sanctuary Worship
11:30 am 3rd Grade Bible Class
3:00 pm Confirmation Class

EVANGELISM TEAM NEEDS YOU!

The Evangelism Team is looking for men, women, and teenagers that are members of the church to join the team. We do activities throughout the year to pull people into the church. If interested, please contact Jen Cockrell at jenn27@zoominternet.net

Worship Highlights: 8:15, 9:00 & 10:30 am

Scripture: Luke 15:11-32

Sermon: "The Prodigal Son"
Rev. Dr. Luke Lindon

Communion Table: The communion table flowers are given by Alan Parkhurst.

LAST CHANCE TO ORDER YOUR EASTER FLOWERS

It's time to order your Easter Flower! You may donate a flower in honor or memory of someone to decorate the Chapel, Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary for Easter and claim it afterward, or have it delivered to a member in a care facility, local first responders, or businesses. **This year there will once again be an assortment of different flowers. There is no way to specify what type you can order, but they will be first come, first serve as to which type of flower you can take.** The cost is \$10.00 for any one of them. Deadline for ordering is **TODAY, March 17th**. Please fill out a yellow order sheet (available from the ushers) and turn it in to the church office OR you can purchase directly through REALM. [Order Easter Flowers](#)

“SHORT STORIES BY JESUS” A LENTEN BIBLE STUDY LAST SESSION

Don't miss the last session! We'll meet this Wednesday at 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

LITURGIST SIGN-UP

Check out the bulletin board in the East Room hallway to sign up to be a liturgist during the 10:30 Sanctuary service. The new sign-up sheets are up for April – June.

COFFEE HOUR

Please consider hosting coffee hour one Sunday. Signups for April and May are still available in the East Room hallway. If no one signs up to host, we will not have coffee hour, so would you please consider hosting one Sunday?

EASTER CANDY NEEDED

The DELTS will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt at church after the 10:30 service on Easter Sunday. We are asking for **individually wrapped** Easter Candy donations to stuff the Easter Eggs with. There will be container outside the church office to put your donations in. Thank you in advance, the kids appreciate it!

EASTER EGG HUNT

Sunday, March 31st After the 10:30 service

On Easter Sunday, after the 10:30 service, we will have a quick Easter Egg Hunt for the children. The children should bring their Easter Basket or a bag so they can add a few more eggs to their collection. We will have the hunt in the grass area by the pergola. Hope to see you then.

DONATION OF THE MONTH

Spring is approaching and the Mission Team hopes the need for hats, socks and gloves are no longer needed for a few months, but would like to collect these items in March! Usually, the stores start to clearance these items as the days get warmer. We will store these items until the community is in need. Gently used items are also welcomed! Place your donations in the box across from the elevator.

LADIES AND GIRLS TEA

The Ladies and Girls Tea will be held on **Saturday, April 27th from 12 pm – 2 pm** in our Fellowship Hall. The menu will include scones, tea sandwiches, fruit, fancy sweets, and of course, tea. Tickets will be sold every Sunday in the East Room after the services from April 7th through April 21st. The price is \$15 for ladies and \$10 for girls under 10.

We are excited to share that the program will be “First Ladies Tea” presented by Women in History from Lakewood, Ohio. Think of what will happen when First Ladies of the United States have tea together and share their stories. You won’t want to miss this...

Once again, we are in need of teacups and teapots. Please let us know if you can share your items and how many of each are available.

If you have questions, please contact Beth Hari, Darlene Fazekas or Becky Weber.

MARCH MISSIONS UPDATE

It was a very busy month for our church and the great outreach your mission team facilitates with your generosity and care. Here’s what happened in March!

**Church World Missions Disaster Buckets
Operation Homes**

**Prospect Closet gloves, hats and coats
Easter baskets for children of incarcerated parents**

Safety, warmth, and kindness marked a March that we can all be happy we were a part of. Each month your generosity continues to keep our mission to our community, both local and more global, a needed and appreciated reality.

Another opportunity to keep in mind: If at the end of a celebration you find yourself with more leftovers than your refrigerator can hold and would like to find a great place to share them with, keep Hope Recovery (330-952-0109) and Cups Café (330-241-5990) in mind. With graduation parties, showers, and other summer gatherings in our future, it is a lovely way to reach out to those who can use them. Happy Easter from the Missions Team and we will report more great stuff in April!

OPEN AND AFFIRMING NOTES

Each member of the ONA team has his or her reasons for wanting our church to be Open and Affirming and reasons that we are passionate in our commitment. Here's Pam Branscome's reflection.

I grew up in a household in which being gay was not a big deal. I know that in the early 60's my dad had a few gay co-workers in the cartoon studio where he was an artist. I thought anyone who was drawing the Jetsons and the Flintstones was cool, so as far as I was concerned, they were just his work friends. I suppose that set the tone for the years to come.

I am ordained in the United Church of Christ (retired) and have served three churches in three states. As a pastor, I have heard stories that have made me feel angry and helpless. In my church in Michigan, a leader of a congregation formed to be a safe space primarily for gays approached me about using our sanctuary on Sunday nights for their worship. They liked that our building was tucked back in a residential neighborhood because there was great fear that if employers recognized their cars and figured out that an employee was worshipping at "that gay church", they might lose their jobs. They were delighted to be welcomed into our sanctuary; at the previous church where they had worshipped, they were not allowed in the sanctuary because it was "holy space".

My commitment grew as I heard the stories LGBT+ folks told me. There were gay men who endured straight marriages for years until finally "coming out" to family and leaving their marriages. "I finally felt like I could breathe." But there were struggles with the ex-spouse over visiting the children. There was the woman who was the Valedictorian of her college class and was invited to give a speech at graduation. Until the dean saw her holding hands with another woman on campus and called her in to say it was not appropriate for her to give the speech. It was the day before graduation. A lesbian couple struggled with bullying in their workplace. Their boss would get on the loudspeaker and declare: I need a dyke to come to _____ to do _____. And her co-workers would howl in laughter. There was a couple who had been together for years and had purchased a home together. This was before the law allowed them to marry. After the death of one of them, his family sued the partner for his half of the house and his partner had to move from their home. Marriage does afford legal protections! Another one could never talk about home at work, could never go to company parties or events, had to pretend to be single, not partnered. Another joined a church and when he offered to be on church council was told emphatically that he could not serve in any leadership role because he was gay.

While I was the minister in Chesterland, I worked with the LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland on several projects. I taught a class there on what the Bible says about homosexuality. Some members of the class were stunned to learn that they weren't going to hell, that being gay or trans wasn't the sin they'd been taught it was in their home churches. Some were suspicious, others weak with relief. I worked with a staff member there who was a social worker to provide a retreat for gay teens from the Center at my church. It was for a few nights in the summer and included fun, as well as educational pieces. We did not require parent permission slips for the retreat because so many of the students either were not "out" to their parents because of fear or had already been told they were no longer welcome in their homes and so were "couch surfing"—living with friends, relatives, or other supportive people in their lives. It was unimaginable to me that parents would kick their own high school children out of the house for being gay. We were determined to be safe space, if only for a few days.

My list of heart-breaking stories goes on and on. I want to be part of a congregation that seeks healing for the broken, that celebrates the life events of all of its members, that accepts all people without a need to pretend that they are someone they aren't. I want to be a church that is a place of friendship and support for people who are going through gender transformation. I want to be a gathering of deep welcome. I want to be a congregation that celebrates the anniversaries of straight and gay couples. I want to be a congregation that welcomes LGBT+ folks into every aspect of congregational life, worship, leadership, and fellowship and makes that welcome visible in the community. I want to be a congregation that is intentional about being a place of welcome and healing for anyone who has been rejected. I want these things because I believe they are what Jesus wants. I want to be an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ.

Questions/comments? Email ONA@UCCMedina.org

Your Open and Affirming Task Force: Dan Daubner, Vicki Marty, Lily Wolff, Brad Rice, Pam Branscome, Alan Parkhurst, and Mike Sferro

EASTER BAGS ARE BACK!!!

We will be making Easter Bags for kids with incarcerated parents once again! If you would like to help, you will get a white bag from the Mission Team, decorate the bag and then fill it with age-appropriate gifts. Keep a look out for a table full of eggs and come visit to sign up! The table will be set up BY March 17th! This has been such a wonderful program to spread some love to kids whose parents will not be able to celebrate Easter with them! More details to come!

LAWN MOWER CREW

"The Lord God took humans and put them in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." – Genesis 2:15
If you admire the beautiful landscaping of our church's grounds, please consider joining the mowing crew. The time commitment for mowing the lawn averages about 1½ hours every two weeks in the spring and once a month in the summer and fall. The Property and Grounds team provides a riding mower, push mower, gasoline and trimming tools. Please contact Carl Skorepa at carlskorepa@yahoo.com or call 330-421-3189 for more details.

The deadline for submission of articles for NEXT Sunday's *Messenger* is this Sunday at 11:30 am

Please submit articles to the church office at office@uccmedina.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: 9 am – 3 pm MONDAY THRU THURSDAY; FRIDAY 9 am – 12 pm

Jeremiah 31:31-34

“Deep In Our Hearts”

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Jeremiah 31:32

One of the distinct features of many United Church of Christ conferences, associations and congregations compared to other faith communities is their commitment to become Open and Affirming (O&A). O&A is a stance of radical welcome to LGBTQIA+ people. Because church communities have historically been places of hurt and exclusion, it is even more imperative that churches who are Open and Affirming take a strong and public stance.

A little over a year ago, the ONA Coalition welcomed a new executive director, The Rev. Katrina Roseboro-Marsh. According to a UCC news story that came out at the time,* She is the first Black woman to head the coalition. “I am honored and excited for this opportunity,” she said. “I realize how important my selection is, and I recognize the magnitude of what this opportunity will mean for the LGBTQIA+ community. I accept this challenge because the coalition has laid the sturdy groundwork to make its next steps forward in reimaging and revisioning, with regeneration as a goal.”

Roseboro-Marsh has more than 16 years of experience as a clinician. Her particular focus has been working with clients who identify as LGBTQIA+, as well as those who also identify as African American with an active religious and/or spiritual practice.

“We are excited to welcome Dr. Katrina to our team because of her unique voice, energy and experience,” said search committee chair and Coalition Leadership Team member the Rev. Derek Terry. “With the current attack on queerness in schools and communities across the country, we feel an obligation to protect and ensure the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Terry added that “while some work to erase the experiences of BIPOC people from the pages of history books,” Roseboro-Marsh will “increase our advocacy work through an intentionally more intersectional approach.”

Roseboro-Marsh is ordained clergy and holds ministerial standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. She is married to the Rev. Tana Roseboro-Marsh; they reside on the east coast with their Morkie, Xola Darling Roseboro-Marsh.

*<https://www.ucc.org/new-ona-director-global-ministries-exec-among-recent-hires/>