



WHAT ARE YOU UP TO? Lent 2024



Serve & Enrich
Zion United Church
of Christ

Welcome

Lenten Chorus: "You Raise Me Up"

**When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary
When troubles come and my heart burdened be
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence
Until You come and sit awhile with me**

**You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas
I am strong, when I am on Your shoulders
You raise me up to more than I can be**

Meditative Moment: An important aspect of the season of Lent is turning to God with an honest heart and asking for the grace we need. This Lent, we are praying the Psalms as we confess our brokenness and seek God's mercy. Hear assurance in what the Psalmist proclaims in Psalm 107 as we go to God in prayer:

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good, for God's steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those God redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south Some were sick through their sinful ways and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and God saved them from their distress; God sent out God's word and healed them and delivered them from destruction. Let them thank the Lord for God's steadfast love, for God's wonderful works to humankind. And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices and tell of God's deeds with songs of joy. (Psalm 107, excerpts)

By the grace of God, may your spirit be uplifted. In the name of Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.

Hymn

In Christ There Is No East or West, 603

We Hear God’s Word—John 3:14-21 (NRSV)

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that God gave God’s only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “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. 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. 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. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 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.”

A Message that Uplifts

John 3:16 is perhaps the most well-known verse in the scriptures and for good reason. It is an expression of the depth and breadth of God’s unfailing love made known through Jesus Christ.

“God does not just deal with this world, but deals with it passionately, loving it and suffering for it. ‘God loved the world so much that he gave his only son to it’ (John 3:16). But this is not logic. This is passion. How else would God be willing to part with God’s own son for the sake of us? Nor is this a result of reasoning. It is a risk. And passion always involves risk, does it not? But only in risking will there be new discoveries and exciting experiences.” –Choan-Seng Song

“Psalm 132: Jesus Is Love” by Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Jesus is love
because God is love
Jesus is love
because God so loved the world
that Jesus was sent in love
for love

Jesus is love
breaks open the eternal possibility
for love
to be for all
because Jesus is love.

Up to Something Good

Prayers of the People

Each midweek service, we’ll have an extended time of prayer. If you like incense or candles, we encourage you to light them at home each day when you spend time

in reflection and prayer. This connects our practice to an ancient practice mentioned by the Psalmist in chapter 141: *“I call upon you, O Lord; come quickly to me; give ear to my voice when I call to you. Let my prayer rise up as incense before you and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.”*

During our time of prayer, you’ll be invited to speak aloud, at different points, that refrain from Psalm 141. It will appear on your screen. Let us pray:

Today we reflect, O God, on the powerful transformation that occurs when we allow our journeys through this life to be witnessed by others. Rather than hiding our imperfections and denying our fully human selves, we accept your call to offer our light, to show up just as we are in this community, and we pray that we can be “up to something good” for our selves, our neighborhoods, and our world. And so this week we start with thanksgiving for these acts of uplifting goodness: the kindness of a stranger when we are in need of a helping hand, the wisdom that comes our way at the right time, the sacrifices made by living generously...

**Let my prayer rise up
like incense before you,
the lifting up of my hands
as an offering to you.**

We call upon you, O God, to incline your ear and extend your love and healing power for these laments: as we remember four years since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we lament the loss of 1,181,607 Americans to COVID-19 (reported by the CDC February 24), millions of others lost world wide, and the grief and trauma that, now, too often, goes unnoticed.

**Let my prayer rise up
like incense before you,
the lifting up of my hands
as an offering to you.**

We call upon you, O God, to give us the strength and courage to be up to something good for the sake of The Good. In this moment — in our mind’s eye — we imagine and offer our commitment to one small thing this week that will lift someone up, elevate and affirm the good when we see it, and bring a bit more calm or joy where

we are. And if we find we are not up to it, we pray we can accept the goodness of others and feel your encouraging love. *[pause for a few moments]*

**Let my prayer rise up
like incense before you,
the lifting up of my hands
as an offering to you.**

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—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.

Hymn

What Wondrous Love Is This, 257

Benediction— Beloved, go forth to uplift those around and to get up to something good. When someone asks you, “What are you up to?” you can respond, “**With God’s help, I’m up to something good!**” Let the people say, Amen! **Amen!**