



Serve & Enrich
Zion United Church
of Christ

LENT 2026
GIFTS OF THE
DARK WOOD

Our Mission: United by Christ's loving embrace, a welcoming light in an unsure world, we serve and enrich the community and provide a safe gathering space for fellowship, spiritual growth, and self-exploration.

Our Vision: Transforming and caring for our community through Christ's love.

Pastor: Sarah Frische-Mouri Hannigan

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February 25, 2026 – Midweek Lenten Worship: The Gift of Uncertainty

Welcome

Gathering Song

There's a Path, verse 1

There's a path... though it winds its way through darkness

We would choose... to avoid it if we could

We awake... to an unexpected calling

God says, "come... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"

Contemporary Reading

Brother David Steidle-Rast

“You are like Rilke’s Swan in his awkward waddling across the ground; the swan doesn’t cure his awkwardness by beating himself on the back, by moving faster, or by trying to organize himself better. He does it by moving toward the elemental water, where he belongs. It is the simple contact with the water that gives him grace and presence. You only have to touch the elemental waters in your own life, and it will transform everything. But you have to let yourself down into those waters from the ground on which you stand, and that can be hard. Particularly if you think you might drown. . . . Let go of all this effort, and let yourself down, however awkwardly, into the waters.”

Hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Readiness Prayer

Our eyes are ready to see your face.
Our ears are ready to hear your call.
Our feet are ready to walk your path.
Our hands are ready to share your peace.
Our hearts are ready to feel your love.
Our minds are ready to know your grace. Amen.

We Hear God's Word

1 Corinthians 13:11-12 (NRSVUE)

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see only a reflection, as in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Exploring Together

It's ok to simply say, "I don't know."

- There are a lot of things about God's world we just don't know. And some people have a hard time with that. They want to have an answer for everything. Luckily, we have this handy tool we can take with us wherever we go—the phrase, "I don't know."
- This is one of the most important things you will ever learn how to say. But there are loads of people who don't ever like to say this phrase because they think it makes them look weak. But not knowing everything doesn't make you weak. It makes you human.
- Even the Apostle Paul admitted that he only knew partially, like looking into a dim mirror. Life is full of uncertainty, of partial knowing, of not knowing, yet we can always trust that God is with us.
- Image – stone: Imagine yourself holding this stone. Let your fingers trace the surface of your stone. Notice how solid it feels in your hand. It's okay to not be sure about everything. There is One who is always sure. No matter what, God is sure that you are loved, and God is sure that in this world you will never be alone.

Prayer

There are many people who are walking the Dark Woods for various reasons. Let us lift up names of those who need our prayers...God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.
There are many places in this world where uncertainty reigns. Let us lift up names of places in this world that need our prayers...God, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn

Be Still My Soul

A Blessing—May the Spirit of the Living God, made known to us most fully within life’s Dark Wood: Go before you to show you the way; Go above you to watch over you; Go behind you to push you into places you may not necessarily go yourself; Go beneath you to uphold and uplift you; Go beside you to be your strong and constant companion; And dwell within you to remind you that you are surely not alone, and that you are loved—loved beyond your wildest imagination. And may the fire of God’s blessing burn brightly upon you, and within you, now and always. Amen.

Sung Benediction

There’s a Path, verse 2

*There’s a path... and it leads us out together
To the wood... where the darkness hovers still
We are sent... and the Spirit goes before us
God says, “go... be my presence in the world.”*

Series based on *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes. All liturgy by Marcia McFee, www.worshipdesignstudio.com. “There’s a Path” words by Marcia McFee, music by Chuck Bell.