



*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

**Organist:** Martha Main

**Bell Choir Director:** Vivian Thomas

**Office Manager:** Michael Brown

**Custodians:** Anita and Greg Law

**Scripture Reader:** Debi Hamblet

**Tech Steward:** Michael Brown



8916 East Troy Avenue  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46239

(317) 862-4136

[zionsecretary@sbcglobal.net](mailto:zionsecretary@sbcglobal.net)

[www.zionuccindy.net](http://www.zionuccindy.net)

**March 22, 2026 – The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent: The Gift of Temptation**

## Prelude

## Gathering

*with 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"*

## Centering Thoughts

*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"*

**Prayer**—Unexpected Love, enter our lives and open us to the gifts residing deep within the Holy Darkness of our lives. Open us to seek your voice from deep within, for we yearn to feel you moving in us...In your many names, we pray. Amen.

**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**

*Holy Ground, 654 (3x)*

### **A Litany of Confession**

One: For paying more attention to the expected path than the right one,

**Many: Forgive and restore us, O God.**

One: For denying our very aliveness out of a misguided self-sacrificing agenda,

**Many: Forgive and restore us, O God.**

One: For valuing the safe choices instead of the ones that lead to life,

**Many: Forgive and restore us, O God.**

### **Assurance of Grace**

One: Hear these words of assurance: God desires our fully-alive selves. God is cheering us on as we discern best choices. God is with you, forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness.

**Many: Thanks be to God! Amen!**

### **Exploring Together**

*Steppingstones*

#### **We Hear God's Word**

*Matthew 4:1-11 (CEB)*

<sup>4</sup> Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. <sup>2</sup> After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, "Since you are God's Son, command these stones to become bread."

<sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, "It's written, *People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God.*"

<sup>5</sup> After that the devil brought him into the holy city and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, <sup>6</sup> "Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written, *I will command my angels concerning you, and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone.*"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "Again it's written, *Don't test the Lord your God.*"

<sup>8</sup> Then the devil brought him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. <sup>9</sup> He said, "I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me."

<sup>10</sup> Jesus responded, “Go away, Satan, because it’s written, *You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*” <sup>11</sup> The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.

*2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NRSV)*

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

## **Reflection**

*The Gift of Temptation*

**A Time for Reflection**—This week, you have a finger labyrinth in your worship guide. Labyrinths are an ancient Christian practice that was designed for an experience of pilgrimage. You are invited to slowly follow the path with your finger, opening to and listening for the intuition, the small voice, inside of you nudging you in the path that brings your life the most fullness.

## **Hymn**

*Christ, You Call Us All to Service, 571*

## **We Respond to God’s Word with Our Giving**

**Invitation**—God breathes new life into us, giving us hope. We can trust God’s promises. Grateful for God’s presence, we bring our gifts this day.~

## **March Benevolence**

*One Great Hour of Sharing and OCWM*

## **\*Doxology**

**We Give Thanks**—Spirit of God, you breathe new life into the dead and stuck places of our daily living. We are so grateful for the power of your transforming love. We bring these gifts, hoping that they will breathe new life into barren places of our world. We bring our lives, filled with new life, ready to serve all your creation. Amen.~

## **Hymn**

*What a Friend We Have in Jesus, 473*

**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.”*

## Postlude

Series based on *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes. All liturgy by Marcia McFee, [www.worshipdesignstudio.com](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com). “There’s a Path” words by Marcia McFee, music by Chuck Bell. ~ Scifres, Mary; Beu, B.J.. Abingdon Worship Annual 2026 (p. 61). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

---

## PRAYERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### THIS WEEK AT ZION

- Sunday, after worship – Choir Practice
- Monday, 10 am – 12 pm – Knitting Group (FH)
- Tuesday, 11 am – 2 Minute Tuesday (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)
- Tuesday, 6:30 pm – Young Adult Matthew Study (Zoom)
- Wednesday – Midweek Lenten Worship (Online)
- Wednesday, 6:30 pm – Meeting with new Cub Scout Leaders (FH)
- Thursday, 7 pm – All Church Matthew Study (Zoom)
- Sunday, March 29, 10 am – Palm Sunday Worship, Welcome to Brooke’s Place

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **HOLY WEEK AND EASTER INVITATIONS**—We hope you’ll join us this year for our Holy Week and Easter celebrations. Our journey takes us from the Dark Wood, to the cross and the tomb, to the glorious hope of resurrection. It’s not an easy journey, but you don’t have to do it alone. Palm Sunday is March 29. Maundy Thursday Worship is April 2 at 7 pm, and Good Friday is April 3 at 7 pm. Easter worship is April 5 at 10 am. All services are in-person and online. There are invitations available for you to pick up in the sanctuary as you invite your friends and family to worship with us, too.
- **EASTER FLOWERS**—You’re invited to help us decorate the sanctuary for Easter! An order sheet is now available in the back of the sanctuary to select your flowers. Pricing will vary depending on the type of flower. You’ll be able to purchase the flower in honor or memory of loved ones. Following Easter Sunday worship, you’ll be invited to take your flowers home with you. Thank you to Michelle for taking the

lead on this again!

## **SERVE**

- **WELCOME BROOKE'S PLACE**—Brooke's Place is an amazing organization that serves children, teens, young adults, and their families as they face loss and grief. They recently opened a new center on the southside and are looking for volunteers. Tara Ntumba, their Support Group Director, will join us in worship on March 29 to share more about ways we can support their work.
- **RILEY CHEER GUILD**—The Riley Cheer Guild and the kids at Riley could use your help! They are running low on Hot Wheels and are out of Play-Doh sets, which include a few containers of Play-Doh and some tools. Donations can be dropped off anytime in the sanctuary at our Riley service station. Just look for the big "Riley" sign and tubs.
- **MARCH BENEVOLENCE: One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) and Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM)**— One Great Hour of Sharing is a special offering of the United Church of Christ that supports partners worldwide with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response. In isolation, no single congregation can completely answer God's call to love. Together we are a bold witness to God's extravagant love for all. Gifts to OCWM make it possible for our Indiana-Kentucky Conference, along with the UCC, to strengthen local churches and leaders and to provide support beyond our community.

## **ENRICH**

- **MATTHEW SMALL GROUPS**—The Faith Formation Team invites everyone in the church to join one of the small groups that will be reading through the Gospel of Matthew. The Young Adult Group meets Tuesdays at 6:30 pm on Zoom. Everyone in the church is invited to join us Thursdays at 7 pm. Zoom links are included in the weekly email each Saturday and in a special email on Thursdays. An in-person group will be offered on Tuesdays from 1-2:30 pm starting in April at Paula's house. We hope this will be a nurturing practice that not only strengthens our spirits but deepens our relationships with each other.
- **MIDWEEK LENTEN WORSHIP**—There is one more Midweek Lenten Worship service. Check your emails, Facebook, or YouTube this Wednesday for the video.