



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: Greg Miller

Tech Steward: Michael Brown



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March 29, 2026 – Palm Sunday: The Gift of Misfits

Prelude and Processional

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**

All Glory, Laud and Honor, 265

A Litany of Confession

One: For hesitating to join the parade of life with our whole selves,

Many: Forgive and restore us, O God.

One: For letting fear keep us from walking alongside our neighbors,

Many: Forgive and restore us, O God.

One: For shying away from struggle even when we know what is right,

Many: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Assurance of Grace

One: God continues to invite us to this parade... it is never too late. God asks us to be companions—and we can... it is never too late. God is with you, forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness.

Many: Thanks be to God! Amen!

Bell Choir

We Hear God's Word

Luke 19:29-42a (NRSV)

*During the scripture reading, please join together in reading the **bold print**.*

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

**"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"**

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!”

Reflection

The Gift of Misfits

A Time for Reflection— This last week of our Lenten journey, you are invited to write on the thank you note you received on your way in. If you are worshipping with us at home, perhaps you have a thank you note on hand you can use. Thank someone who has been part of your “misfit” community—someone who has been with you at times in the Dark Wood journey of your life.

Hymn

Ride on, Ride on in Majesty, 268

We Respond to God’s Word with Our Giving

Invitation—In the Palm Sunday story, we get a glimpse of the world as it could be, where all share of their resources. A group of misfits came together for the sake of their Savior. The disciples offered their time, the neighbor offered his donkey, and the crowds offered their cloaks and palms. All worked together for good. Let us model this generosity, this commitment to sharing and pooling our resources, for the good of the world.

March Benevolence

One Great Hour of Sharing and OCWM

***Doxology**

We Give Thanks—God, when misfits come together, the world can change for the better. As we pool together our resources and share what we have, use these gifts for the sake of our Savior, that his love might be felt near and far. May these gifts offer comfort in the Dark Wood, strength to take the next step, and hope for the new life you long for us to know. Amen.

A Holy Week Invitation

Hymn

Near the Cross, 479

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. “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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT ZION

- Sunday, 9 am – Bell Choir Practice
- Sunday, 10 am – Palm Sunday Worship, Welcome to Brooke’s Place
- Tuesday, 6:30 pm – Young Adult Matthew Study (Zoom)
- Thursday, 6:30 pm – Choir Practice
- Thursday, 7 pm – Maundy Thursday Worship (in-person and online)
- Friday, 7 pm – Good Friday Worship (in-person and online)
- Sunday, 9:15 am – Choir Practice
- Sunday, 9:30 am – Bell Choir Practice
- Sunday, April 5, 10 am – Easter Worship

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. 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. Today is the last Sunday to place your order. Following Easter Sunday worship, you are 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 this Sunday 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**— Thank you to everyone who has been able to participate in our Matthew Small Groups during Lent. Both the Young Adult Group and All Church Zoom Group had wonderful conversation as we read through this Gospel. An in-person group will be offered on Tuesdays from 1-2:30 pm starting on April 7 at Paula’s house. If you haven’t yet joined one of the small groups, this is a great opportunity.