



*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:** Vivian Thomas

**Tech Steward:** Greg Miller



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**April 2, 2026 – Maundy Thursday**

**Welcome**

**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, Holy Spirit Guide, open us to the story of pain and sacrificial love anew. Help us to walk with each other as Jesus walks with us. And help us this night to walk with Jesus in the Dark Woods of humanity's pain.

**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.**

## **OUR FAITH STORY**

### **Introduction**

#### **Choir: Song of Preparation**

*No Turning Back ("I Have Decided")*

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

*John 12:1-8, Paula Prange*

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. <sup>3</sup> Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it<sup>[b]</sup> so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

#### **Reflection**

*Mary, Friend of Jesus, Debi Hamblet*

#### **Hymn**

*What Wondrous Love Is This, 257*

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

*John 13:2b-15, Vivian Thomas*

And during supper <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup> got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all

of you.” <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

<sup>12</sup> After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

**Reflection**

*Simon Peter, Disciple, Greg Miller*

**Hymn**

*Will You Let Me Be Your Servant, 391*

**Called to Serve**

*Handwashing and Anointing*

*You are invited to come forward for these ritual actions. First, you’ll be anointed with oil. Second, you will wash your hands. Third, the friend who came before you will help dry your hands. Finally, you will help dry the hands of the friend who follows. If you’re worshipping at home, please invite God’s blessing into your life by make the sign of the cross on your forehead and then prayerfully wash and dry your hands.*

**Prayer**

**We Hear God’s Word**

*John 13:21-30, Kaylee Gephart-Kile*

<sup>21</sup> After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” <sup>22</sup> The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. <sup>23</sup> One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining close to his heart; <sup>24</sup> Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. <sup>25</sup> So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. <sup>27</sup> After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” <sup>28</sup> Now no one knew why he said this to him. <sup>29</sup> Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival,” or that he should give something to the poor. <sup>30</sup> So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

**Reflection**

*Judas, Disciple, Nathan Law*

**We Gather at the Table**

**Hymn**

*Let Us Break Bread Together, 699*

**Set Your Place at the Table**—*For those worshipping with us at home, please use whatever you have on hand to represent the bread and the cup. For those worshipping with us in-person, communion cups are available on the table in the back of the sanctuary, along with goldfish crackers for children.*

**Our Invitation**—Friends, just as Jesus did not hesitate to share the cup of wine with Judas, who he knew would betray him to the authorities, Jesus invites all of us, no matter our pain, our despair, our failures and faults. Jesus says, come and eat with me for this grace can transform you. And so this night you are invited, just like in that Last Supper, to share the food that nourishes our spirits on the journey. We remember his words that echoed that night to his disciples and that have echoed through the ages, “I am always with you.”

### **A Litany of Confession**

**One:** Jesus, even as we enter the heartbreak and anguish of Holy Week, we know that we do not fully understand what God has done for us.

**Many: You have loosed our bonds. What shall we return to you for all we have received?**

**One:** Sometimes we follow rituals but miss their meaning. Sometimes we say the words but forget to love.

**Many: May God help us pay our vows in the presence of all God’s people.**

**One:** Jesus, washing the feet of your friends, you ask: “Do you know what I have done for you?”

**Many: May God help us to serve one another in love as you have served us.**

**One:** Jesus, breaking the bread and blessing the cup, you ask: “Do you know what I have done for you?”

**Many: May God help us eat and drink in remembrance of you.**

**One:** Jesus, commanding us to love one another, you ask: “Do you know what I have done for you?”

**Many: We love God, who hears our every supplication. We call on the name of the Lord.~**

### **Assurance of Grace**

**One:** God always hears us. We call on God as long as we live, sure of God’s love. Jesus loves those who are his own, loving them till the end. Know that you are God’s own beloved in Jesus Christ.~

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

### **The Words of Institution**

## **Blessing Our Meal**

### **We Share the Bread and the Cup**

**We Give Thanks**—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior’s presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ’s body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.’

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

**Invitation**—When we gather together in worship as a community, we don’t just take an offering because we or others in our community need money and other resources. We also do it as a practice, a way of following Jesus’ example into mutual relationships that reveal God’s loving ways in the world. So let us give our offerings now as a sign of our ongoing striving to be a part of the ways of love.+

### **April Benevolence**

*Global Ministries*

#### **\*Doxology**

**We Give Thanks**—God, may the gifts we bring this night be symbols of our commitment to walking with the ways of Jesus and serving your beloved as he first service us. May these gifts be hope in the Dark Wood. Amen.

### **Hymn**

*Beneath the Cross of Jesus, 255*

**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 (pp. 70-71). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition. ‘UCC Book of Worship.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### YOU’RE INVITED

- **GOOD FRIDAY**—Please join us tomorrow evening at 7 pm, in-person or online, for our Good Friday service as we continue our journey nearer the cross.
- **AN EASTER INVITATION**—We hope you’ll join us this Sunday as we celebrate the new life we know in Christ. We’ll move from the Dark Wood into the beauty of the Garden as we walk with our Savior in hope and love.

### SERVE

- **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.
- **SAVE THE DATE**—Our next Red Cross Blood Drive is Thursday, April 23, from 12-6pm in the Zion United Community Center Gym. Make a difference in our community and beyond and help ensure blood is on the shelves before it is needed for trauma victims, transplant recipients and those being treated for cancer and sickle cell disease. You’ll find the link to register at [www.zionuccindy.net/blooddrive](http://www.zionuccindy.net/blooddrive).

### 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. The Young Adult Group will finish their discussion on Tuesday, April 7, at 6:30 pm on Zoom. The All Church Zoom Group added two more sessions. They’ll meet April 9 and 23 at 7 pm. An in-person group will be offered on Tuesdays in April 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.