



# Central Congregational United Church of Christ

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 15, 2026

Ministers / All of us

Pastor / Rev. Gage Church

Worship Leader / Betty Edson

Music Director and Accompanist / Linda Smith

Music Guests / Carlos Cabezas and Valerie Ball

Song Leaders / Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers

## Music for Gathering

### \*Opening Prayer

God of love, you demonstrate your care for us  
by coming among us in Jesus, our Good Shepherd.  
Tend to us with mercy, gather us when we wander,  
and protect us from the perils of this world.

Help us to recognize Christ's voice and Christ's calling.

Remind us we are known. We are loved. We are invited to follow. Amen.

### \*Congregational Hymn

*"I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry"*

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.

I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well;

I'll be there in case you wander off and find where demons dwell.

*Continued on next page.*

When you found the wonder of the Word, I was there to cheer you on;  
you were raised to praise the living God, to whom you now belong.  
Should you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one,  
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till the rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young,  
I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.  
When the evening gently closes in and you shut your weary eyes,  
I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

## Greetings & Announcements

### Call to Worship

Come into God's presence,  
you who imagine and you who seek,  
you who disrupt and you who repair.

**By the Spirit, we gather in hope.**

Come into God's embrace,  
you who seek a good shepherd,  
you who long to be known and protected,  
you who are far off and you who are near.

**In Christ, we gather as one flock.**

Come into God's presence,  
singing for joy and for justice;  
bringing prayer and worship,  
your most faithful acts of resistance.

**To God be the glory! We gather to praise!**



*\* indicates to rise in body or spirit.*

***Bold indicates to speak or sing in unison.***

## Prayer of Unburdening

Loving God, forgive us for pursuing folly over wisdom.

Forgive us for choosing flashy leaders over leaders  
you have gifted with experience and discernment.

Forgive us for not holding our leaders accountable.

Help us keep firm boundaries with leaders,  
encouraging them to make hard choices.

And when you call us into leadership roles,  
help us rise to the occasion with integrity and faithfulness. Amen.

## Assurance of God's Love

### Passing the Peace

#### The Reading

*John 10:1-18*

The truth of the matter is, whoever doesn't enter the sheepfold through the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a robber. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep, the one for whom the keeper opens the gate. The sheep know the shepherd's voice; the shepherd calls them by name and leads them out.

Having led them all out of the fold, the shepherd walks in front of them and they follow because they recognize the shepherd's voice. They simply don't follow strangers — they'll flee from them because they don't recognize the voice of strangers.”

Even though Jesus used this metaphor with them, they didn't grasp what he was trying to tell them. He therefore said to them again: “The truth of the matter is, I am the sheep gate. All who came before me were thieves and marauders whom the sheep didn't heed.

I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be safe — you'll go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy. I came that you might have life and have it to the full.

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**Bold** indicates to speak or sing in unison.

I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd would die for the sheep. The hired hand, who is neither shepherd nor owner of the sheep, catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be scattered or snatched by the wolf. That's because the hired hand works only for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me, in the same way Abba God knows me and I know God — and for these sheep I will lay down my life.

I have other sheep that don't belong to this fold — I must lead them, too, and they will hear my voice. And then there will be one flock, one shepherd.

This is why Abba God loves me — because I lay down my life, only to take it up again. No one takes my life from me; I lay it down freely. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. This command I received from my Abba.”

## Special Music

*“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”*

Carlos Cabezas and Valerie Ball

## Message

*“Shepherds, Not Kings”*

Rev. Gage Church

## \*Congregational Hymn

*“God's Eye Is on the Sparrow”*

**Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,  
why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home,  
when God is ever my portion? My constant friend will be:  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.**

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I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

“Let not your heart be troubled,” Christ's tender word I hear,  
and resting on God's goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;  
though by the path God leads me but one step I may see:  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,  
when song gives place to sighing, when hope within me dies,  
I then draw close to my Savior, from care I am set free:  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,  
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

## Joys and Concerns

*We respond with “Lord, hear our prayer.”*

## Time of Silence

## Pastoral Prayer

## The Prayer of Jesus

*Please pray any version you wish. Here is one version:*

Our Creator, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.  
Your Kin-dom come, your 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 yours is the Kin-dom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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## Offering

God is good! All the time!  
All the time! God is good!  
Let us share the goodness of our God.

## \*Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done;  
Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.

## \*Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, we bring our gifts like tiny seeds from a dandelion.  
Send out these gifts on the mighty wind of your Spirit,  
bringing growth, bearing fruit, and nourishing our neighbors.  
May each gift of every size bloom with your holy imagination. Amen.

## \*Closing Hymn

*“O for a World”*

O for a world where everyone respects each other’s ways,  
where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.

O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,  
where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.

The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise.  
Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.

O for a world preparing for God’s glorious reign of peace,  
where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.

O for a world where everyone respects each other’s ways,  
where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.

## \*Benediction

## \*Music for Sending

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