



Central Congregational United Church of Christ

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

March 1, 2026

Ministers / All of us
Pastor / Rev. Gage Church
Worship Leader / Melanie Ralston
Music Director and Accompanist / Linda Smith
Special Music / Tim Sharp
Song Leaders / Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers

Music for Gathering

*Opening Prayer

Generous God,
you bless your people in every age:
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Hannah, Elizabeth, and Mary,
children and those who are vulnerable,
all who know poverty, hunger, grief, and hate.
May we follow your example
in sharing and seeking blessing for others,
not hoarding it for ourselves.
Let us share your abundant life and love,
offered to us and to all
through the vulnerability and generosity
of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

** indicates to rise in body or spirit.*

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

***Congregational Hymn**

“Called as Partners in Christ’s Service”

Called as partners in Christ’s service,
called to ministries of grace,
we respond with deep commitment,
fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing,
side by side and friend with friend,
equal partners in our caring
to fulfill God’s chosen end.

So God grant us for tomorrow
ways to order human life
that surround each person’s sorrow
with a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living,
our compassion to increase,
messengers of faith, thus giving
hope and confidence and peace.

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 fellowship,
you who are broken and blessed,
you who show mercy,
as God has first been merciful to you.

In Christ, we gather in blessing.

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!

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Prayer of Unburdening

You told us to bless the poor,
to make peace with our neighbors,
to share what we have with others,
and to live our faith through quiet actions.

Yet we often fail this calling.

Forgive us, God, where and when we have slipped
into the world's ways of hate, greed, and violence.

Guide us into faithfulness once again,
for your ways are loving, just, and compassionate. Amen.

Assurance of God's Love

Passing the Peace

The Reading

Luke 6:17-36

Coming down the mountain with them, Jesus stopped in a level area where there were a great number of disciples. A large crowd of people was with them from Jerusalem and all over Judea, to as far north as the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon — people who had come to hear Jesus and be healed of their diseases, and even to be freed from unclean spirits. Indeed, the whole crowd was trying to touch Jesus, because power was coming out of him and healing them all.

Looking at the disciples, Jesus said: “You who are poor are blessed, for the reign of God is yours. You who hunger now are blessed, for you’ll be filled. You who weep now are blessed, for you’ll laugh. You are blessed when people hate you, when they scorn and insult you and spurn your name as evil because of the Chosen One. On the day they do so, rejoice and be glad: Your reward will be great in heaven, for their ancestors treated the prophets the same way.

But woe to you rich, for you are now receiving your comfort in full. Woe to you who are full, for you’ll go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you’ll

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weep in your grief. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in the same way.

To you who hear me, I say: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. When they slap you on one cheek, turn and give them the other; when they take your coat, let them have your shirt as well. Give to all who beg from you. When someone takes what is yours, don't demand it back.

Do to others what you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit does that do you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. If you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit does that do to you? Even 'sinners' do as much. If you lend to those you expect to repay you, what credit does that do you? Even 'sinners' lend to other 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full.

Love your enemies and do good to them. Lend without expecting repayment, and your reward will be great. You'll rightly be called children of the Most High, since God is good even to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be compassionate, as your loving God is compassionate.

Special Music

"When We All Get to Heaven"

Tim Sharp

Message

Rev. Gage Church

*Congregational Hymn

"Count Your Blessings"

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
when you are discouraged thinking all is lost,
count your many blessings, name them one by one,
and it will surprise you what our God has done.

Continued on next page.

Refrain: Count your blessings, name them one by one;
count your blessings, see what God has done.
Count your blessings, name them one by one;
count your many blessings, see what God has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly,
and you will be singing as the days go by.

Refrain

So, amid the conflict, whether great or small,
do not be discouraged, God is over all;
count your many blessings, angels will attend,
help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Refrain

Joys and Concerns

We respond with "Lord, hear our prayer."

Time of Silence

Prayers of the People

Please follow words on the screen.

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.

Offering

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

*A note to visitors: Your presence here today is a gift to us.
We are “centralchurchopeka” on Venmo.*

*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 before you 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.

Communion

God be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your fears, your hopes, your dreams.
We lift them up to God.
Let us give thanks to our generous, imaginative God.
We joyfully give our thanks and praise.

And so, with your people on earth and all the saints before us,
we praise your name and join the unending hymn:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, we thank you for these tangible gifts
of bread and cup that feed our bodies and nourish our souls.
May these blessings of grace be shared, not hoarded.

Though we have been fed today at the table,
may we still walk away hungry for justice,
working for freedom and fullness for all of your creation. Amen.

*Closing Hymn

“For the Beauty of the Earth”

For the beauty of the earth,
for the splendor of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon, and stars of light,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the good that love inspires,
for a world where none exclude,
for a faith that never tires,
and for every heart renewed,
God of all, to you we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

*Benediction

*Music for Sending

“Amen!”

SAVE THE DATES

Justice and Safety Check-in @ 9 a.m. every Sunday

Meditation @ 5 p.m. every Monday

Book Club @ 4 p.m. every Thursday

Church Council / March 8 after worship

Game Night / March 13 @ 6 p.m.

Ecumenical Palm Sunday Service / March 29 @ 10 a.m.

Palm Sunday Brunch / March 29 @ 11 a.m.

Maundy Thursday Service and Potluck / April 2 @ 6 p.m.

Good Friday Prayer Vigil / April 3 @ 6-8 p.m.

Easter Celebration Service / April 5 @ 10 a.m.



ADVOCACY FOR ALL Second Sunday in Lent

Walter Brueggemann sees lament as essential to faith and justice. He argues lament is the language of people who refuse to accept the world as it is and dare to voice their pain, grief, and protest before God. Lament interrupts denial and makes space for truth-telling about suffering and injustice. By lamenting, communities resist silence and passivity, opening themselves to God's new possibilities.

Advocacy is the holy work of imagination. Once we lament, we must take loving action to help make things right. Advocating for ourselves and others is central to our faith because God imagines a world of wholeness, healing, and equity for all people. Scripture calls us not only to love God but also to love our neighbor in tangible, restorative ways. When we seek justice, we participate in God's work of making all things new.

LAMENT: POLITICAL DIVISION

God of unity and truth, we cry out in a time of deep division. We mourn families split by anger, communities fractured by fear, friendships lost to blame and bitterness. We grieve how power is used to wound, how truth is twisted for gain, how the common good is cast aside. The gap feels wide. The trust feels broken. The path forward feels unclear. How long, O God? How long until justice and compassion lead us? Lord, have mercy.

*Silence: Take a moment to reflect and lament
as you prepare your heart for action.*

ACT: BUILDING BRIDGES

When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation with someone whose political views differ from yours? How much of your energy goes toward naming differences rather than finding common ground?

A lot of division comes from assuming we know what others think without ever hearing their stories. Jesus regularly crossed social boundaries to sit with people others avoided—not to argue, but to listen and connect.

This week, invite someone who thinks differently from you to coffee, lunch, or a walk in the park. Avoid politics altogether unless it can be done respectfully. Instead, focus on stories: Where did they grow up? What was their childhood like? What's a favorite book or movie, and why? Who is their role model? What are they proud of? What dreams or goals do they hold? You may be surprised by the common ground you discover.

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