

Grace United Methodist Church



March 5, 2023 – 10 AM

Order of Worship Second Sunday in Lent/Communion Sunday

Grace United Methodist Church is a Family of Faith striving to share God's love with all.

*** Please Stand If You Are Able**

Opening Voluntary – “My Help Cometh From The Lord” by Jackie Gouche Farris

Choral Introit

Welcome and Greetings

*** Call to Worship**

L: Come into the wilderness. Step into the unknown possibility that is here in this place with all of our questions.

P: The sun might be shining but it still feels bleak.

L: We step into the wilderness because we have questions and it is here that it feels safe to ask what we long to know.

P: We come together to a find deeper understanding of God's love.

*** Opening Hymn #369** – “Blessed Assurance”

ASSURANCE

*** Opening Prayer**

God of night and of day, we dare to venture out into the unknown—to the edge of the wilderness where you will guide us. We come to be led and encouraged. We come to find answers to questions we didn't even know we had. We come to find you, steadfast and true. Amen.

Scriptures

Epistle – Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

1 What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? **2** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **3** For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." **4** Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. **5** But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. **13** For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. **14** If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. **15** For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation. **16** For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, **17** as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

L: The Word of God, For the People of God. **P: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel – John 3:1-17 (Please stand if you are able)

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. **2** He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." **3** Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." **4** Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" **5** Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. **6** What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' **8** The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." **9** Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" **10** Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? **11** "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. **12** If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? **13** No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. **14** And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. **16** "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. **17** "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

L: The Word of God, For the People of God. **P: Thanks be to God.**

* **Hymn before Message #452** – “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

OLIVET

Message – “Through the Night”

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey L. Hooker, Pastor

Pastoral Prayer

(Children come over to the Church from Sunday School and join their parents.)

Invitation

John the baptizer called us to repent as the kin-dom of heaven comes near. Yet, we often decide that we would rather not change our lives to see that realm. Let us come to God and ask for a spirit of repentance as we confess our sins to God and to one another.

Prayer of Confession

Looking out into the wild possibility of this moment, O God, it feels like an impassable mountain or a vast, deepening sea hindering our way forward. We feel discouraged and overwhelmed. We don't move from where we are. You know our hearts, O God, and the disbelief that has come to live there. You know how the bleakness of this night immobilizes us. We are timid. We fear failure. We confess fear of dying even if it is for the sake of truly living. Amen.

All pray in silence.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

L: Beloved, the God who calls us to take bold steps outward, is the One who journeys closely within. In God, there is companionship and renewed strength through the wilderness of every night.

P: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing of the Peace of Christ

God's blessings are all around us, in all the families of the earth. As human beings created in God's own image, we carry that divine blessing in our DNA! Let us pass the peace with words of reconciliation and love.

Invitation to Tithes and Offering

Through this invitation to share our gifts, we acknowledge that God has blessed us abundantly, and that we are to be a blessing to the world. In the very act of giving, in every act of bestowing blessings on another, we find that we are blessed yet again. I encourage you now to enter fully into this amazing cycle of blessing.

Choral Selection – “Lenten Meditation” by J. Althouse

*** Presentation of the Offering and Doxology Hymn #95**

*** Prayer of Dedication**

Generous God, you shower us with gifts, including the greatest gift of all, your own Son, Jesus Christ. In thanksgiving and praise, we offer you our time, our money, our very selves. In these actions, we proclaim our intention to be a blessing in your world. Amen.

Thanksgiving and Communion

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty (almighty God), creator of heaven and earth. You brought all things into being and called them good. From the dust of the earth you formed us into your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. When rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, you bore up the ark on the waters, saved Noah and his family, and made covenant with every living creature on earth. When you led your people to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, you gave us your commandments and made us your covenant people. When your people forsook your covenant, your prophet Elijah fasted for forty days and forty nights; and on your holy mountain, he heard your still small voice.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their 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.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. When you gave him to save us from our sin, your Spirit led him into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights to prepare for his ministry. When he suffered and died on the cross for our sin, you raised him to life, presented him alive to the apostles during forty days, and exalted him at your right hand. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. Now, when we your people prepare for the yearly feast of Easter, you lead us to repentance for sin and the cleansing of our hearts, that during these

forty days of Lent we may be gifted and graced to reaffirm the covenant you made with us through Christ.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to the disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND CHORAL RESPONSE

BREAKING THE BREAD

GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING COMMUNION

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

*** Closing Hymn #98 – "To God Be the Glory"**

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

*** Dismissal with Blessing**

Closing Voluntary – "Andante in F" by W. A. Hall

(Please remain seated for the Closing Voluntary)

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jeffrey L. Hooker	Ushers: Everett Fitch, Carol Provenzano, Michael Provenzano
Director of Music: Kenneth Richardson Liturgist and Reader: Earl Boyd	Audio-Tech: Brandon Gauntlett Counting Team: Debbie Nicosia

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
21 South Franklin Avenue
Valley Stream, NY 11580

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey L. Hooker, Pastor
Church Phone #: 516/825-1182; Music Ministry Phone #: 516/825-1940
Church E-mail: GraceVSNY@aol.com; Church Website: GraceVSNY.org