



**Third Sunday after Epiphany
January 25, 2026**

Gratitude
“Our purpose — Follow Christ”

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

Third Sunday after Epiphany

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Singing Prelude *I Come to You* Brown/Folk Tune
tune: Poor Wayfaring Stranger

**I come to you, the lost and scattered;
I come to you, the smug and strong;
I come to you, the souls ungathered;
now come to me, learn you belong.**

**Leave all you've done, I am forgiving;
leave all you've known to come and see;
leave all you've owned, you're just beginning;
leave all you've been and follow me.**

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning, Venice United Church of Christ. Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus who welcomes each and every one of us into this sacred space this morning. I am Pastor Barb, and Gary Leidheiser will be our liturgist today.

Beautifying our sanctuary today, we have flowers given by a friend of Venice UCC.

For those who are worshipping on-line, whether today or at some point in the future, you are invited to like us, to share us, and to let your presence be known in the comments so that we can keep each other in prayer.

For those of us here in this space of stained glass and compassionate friendship, if you have a prayer request or a joy to share, please make sure that you let the office know, as I want to make sure that we can lift up everyone's prayers as we worship.

For some of you, this is your first time joining us. I hope that you have been warmly greeted and have noted your presence either at our welcome table or through the QR codes found in the pews. We are excited to get to know you. We also have an exciting new gift for you, these gorgeous blue stainless steel water bottles.

For in this holy, wonderful, ordinary space,
as Venice United Church of Christ,
we empower and invite everyone
to join us in this divine place
that we share on line and in person.

For when we gather, everyone is invited,
no matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey,
and no one is turned away.

We do have a few upcoming activities to share.

Following Worship, we will be gathering in Naar Hall for Fellowship Time. Thank you to Toni and John Yahres who are pitching in to host Fellowship Time today. The bowls and slips of paper are out on the tables again this week to fill with our gratitude. Please feel free to open, read, and share the

reflections on gratitude that were shared last week and then add new ones to the bowl as we practice gratitude together.

For those who would like to join us, Maria Groody, our church moderator and I will be hosting an informal time of conversation in the Conference Room during Fellowship Time. Sometimes it can feel like the more things stay the same, the more they change. So whether you have questions, would like to simply get to know us better, or would like to set up a separate time to chat more, feel free to stop by.

There will also be multiple sign-up sheets to check out: 1. a Word Made Flesh dinner at 5:30 on Tuesday, 2. Crop Walk sign-up will also be available; please see Ross Ament. (Schwa meant) 3. If you would like to request a name tag. While not a sign-up sheet, Giving statements are also available, and Dee has red bags available to fill for our Valentines Day unhoused initiative.

For those of you are interested in either becoming a member or learning more about what that means, grab some treats and head to the Parlor.

This week, we continue to host and sponsor a variety of activities that help to connect us; see the app for more information.

Coming up in February, there are several great opportunities to put in your calendar. We are looking for volunteers to help with the Rummage sale, We will be hosting a Fat Tuesday Pancake Lunch, and our Ash Wednesday service is coming up.

Today is the fourth Sunday of our January sermon series called, 'Grateful'. The second of our four primary pillars in the Big Joy project, we are working with Robert A Emmon's book entitled, "Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude can make you happier."

Over the past month, we have exploring ways that we experience and practice Gratitude:

In Awe, we encounter God. With humility, we see and honor the unique and beautiful humanity that brings us each here. We seek mercy for the times in which we have failed to recognize the Divine breath of God moving, sustaining, and healing each other. May our worship align us again with God's holy purpose — to love one another as Christ loves us.

For we come to worship a generous, steadfastly loving God, who created and names each of us a beloved child of God.

So Come, beautifully authentic, humbly transforming, faithfully Good-news following body of Christ, and let us Worship God!

We Approach God's Presence

Bringing in the Light of Christ

Bless the Lord, O My Soul

Redman

Meditation

Gratitude

Guebert

Bella HandBell Choir

Responsive Call to Worship¹

Gary Leidheiser

Come, people of God—the dawn is breaking!
A new day rises where sorrow had settled in.

The dawn is breaking—and we rise with it.

Where burdens have bent us low,
the Holy One draws near, steadyng our steps.

The Holy One draws near—and we gather our courage.

Where yokes have weighed on shoulders and spirits,
God is loosening what has held us down.

What held us down is lifting—and we move toward freedom.

Come, all who yearn for justice;
 all who hope for healing;
 all who hunger for joy.

**We come to the dawning way,
 we come to the hopeful way,
 we come to the way God makes glorious.**

Please rise in body or in spirit as we sing:
“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You”

¹ **Make Glorious the Way: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday after Epiphany** was written by Rev. Michael Anthony Howard, who serves as the Minister of Faith in Action for the Living Water Association, Ohio NorthEast, Heartland Conference, UCC. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/epiphany-3a-january-25/>

*Hymn “*Joyful, Joyful We Adore You*” ...

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, God of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the storms of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.
2. All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
teach us what our praise should be.
3. You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
well-spring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Loving Spirit, Father, Mother, all who love belong to you;
teach us how to love each other, by that love our joy renew.
4. Mortals, join the mighty chorus which the morning stars began;
boundless love is reigning o'er us, reconciling race and clan.
Ever singing, move we forward, faithful in the midst of strife,
joyful music leads us onward in the triumph song of life.

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You

Ps. 145:10; Isa. 49:13

Henry van Dyke, 1907; alt.



1 Joy - ful, joy - ful, we a - dore you, God of glo - ry, God of love;
 2 All your works with joy sur-round you, earth and heaven re - flect your rays,
 3 You are giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless - ing, ev - er blessed,
 4 Mor-tals, join the might-y cho - rus which the morn-ing stars be - gan;



Hearts un - fold like flowers be - fore you, open-ing to the sun a - bove.
 Stars and an - gels sing a - round you, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.
 Well-spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean depth of hap - py rest!
 Bound-less love is reign - ing o'er us, re - con - cil - ing race and clan.



Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness, drive the storms of doubt a - way;
 Field and for - est, vale and moun-tain, flower-y mead-ow, flash-ing sea,
 Lov - ing Spir - it, Fa - ther, Moth - er, all who love be - long to you;
 Ev - er sing - ing, move we for - ward, faith - ful in the midst of strife,



Giv - er of im - mor-tal glad-ness, fill us with the light of day.
 Chant-ing bird and flow-ing foun-tain, teach us what our praise should be.
 Teach us how to love each oth - er, by that love our joy re - new.
 Joy - ful mu - sic leads us on - ward in the tri - umph song of life.



Henry van Dyke was a noted church leader, U.S. ambassador, Navy chaplain, and prolific writer. Many people associate this hymn with Beethoven's ninth symphony, but few are aware of the original poem by the German classicist F. Schiller (1759-1805) that inspired Beethoven.

Tune: HYMN TO JOY 8.7.8.7.D.

Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824

Adapt. and harm. Edward Hodges, 1846

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*Prayer of Transformation and New Life²

Holy One,

Your light dawns where our shadows are deepest.

You are never far, your presence remains with us.

Your compassion rises like morning light!

**Awaken us to the glimmers of your glory
breaking into our world's weariness.**

Shine upon the paths we walk—

**paths obstructed by fear, uncertainty,
and the heavy burdens our communities carry.**

Lift from our shoulders the weight we carry:

the worries we rehearse,

the fears we nurture,

the habits that hold us tight,

the patterns we cling to,

the moments we turn from compassion,

the truths we avoid.

Unbind what tightens around our hearts.

**We drop the nets of our previous preoccupations, ready for You
to shape us for your healing, just, and generous work.**

Help us see your radiance in overlooked places and in one another.

Make us ready, alert, and courageous—

 a people who move with your Spirit,

 who join your work of release,

 and who make glorious the way

where your compassion, peace, and joy can flourish.

Awaken us.

Amen.

² **Make Glorious the Way: Service Prayers for the Third Sunday after Epiphany** was written by Rev. Michael Anthony Howard, who serves as the Minister of Faith in Action for the Living Water Association, Ohio NorthEast, Heartland Conference, UCC. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/epiphany-3a-january-25/> edited

*Words of Grace

Hear the Good News:

Into every place of strain or sorrow, God's peace draws near.
God's compassion comforts. God's justice opens a way forward.
God calls and welcomes each of us into the beloved community.

Filled with grace, we begin anew. Amen.

*Response

I Come to You v 2

**I come to you, the disregarded;
I come to you, the scarred and shamed;
I come to you, the brokenhearted,
now come to me and be reclaimed.**

**Leave all you've done, I am forgiving;
leave all you've known to come and see;
leave all you've owned, you're just beginning;
leave all you've been and follow me.**

We Encounter God in the Word

From the Prophets

Isaiah 9:1-4

NRSVue

1-4 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

God is still speaking. Thanks be to God!

Anthem

Come, Follow Me

Kupferschmid

18-20 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.

21-22 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23-25 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

The Word of God. Thanks be to God!

May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of all of our hearts
be acceptable to you, O God,
our truth and our salvation.

Have you ever taken a walk in the dark — on purpose?

When I was a young adult, I worked several summers between school semesters at a summer camp for church based groups. While my speciality was folding and stringing peace cranes — the kids actually got to a thousand that summer to send to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial — along with teaching kids ways to communicate in healthy ways with each other... my eldest brother and his wife were the naturalists. And one of the things that they specialized in, besides catching and releasing red sliders after safely showing their unique properties to a cabin or two full of kids, was taking the campers on Night Hikes.

Now as a kid, my vision got really bad, really fast. And concerned that in my later adulthood I might end up completely blind, I took precautions. When my class learned about Helen Keller, for extra credit I made a huge poster presentation on Braille out of kidney beans. Afterwards, that poster came to live on my wall right by my bed, so that I could practice the letters every day. With a stylus, I was even able to practice writing in Braille.

My preparations didn't end there. Every time I woke up in the middle of the night and needed a drink of water from the kitchen, I would practice moving quietly, memorizing the steps and the

turns, navigating by feel rather than use the flashlight that was by my bed. To make it fun, I pretended I was a spy, and I got really good at navigating around objects that didn't always stay in the same place — like the piano bench.

So when the kids that I was counseling that summer decided they wanted to sign up for a night hike, I was pretty excited, too. After all, I had practiced navigating in the dark. But as we gathered, and began our hike, I quickly discovered that my childhood goal on maneuvering silently through the darkness meant that I hadn't taken time to really experience the darkness itself.

We met at dusk. And as the sun set, our attention was drawn to the moment when color disappeared, and all around us we dwelt in gray-scale. We watched as red turned black, and light pink turned grey. The moon rose over the lake, but even in the light of the moon it was hard to distinguish each others' facial expressions as faces, hands and eyes seemed to float in the darkness. We quickly learned how reliant we are on non-verbal cues to communicate with each other. In the silence, we listened as the sounds of the day time animals stilled, and the sounds of the night began. We watched as backpacks became rocks and disappeared into the night around us, as racks of rowboats became indeterminate structures.

As a counselor, I was there to support any of the kids who might be experiencing that fear — not of the darkness, per se, but of the things they could no longer see that lived in the dark. As the camp was in Northern Indiana, it was relatively safe. No bears, no bobcats, and no venomous snakes had been spotted in the area. But there was still that fear of wandering off the path and

getting lost alone.

And then, as the hike concluded, a flashlight came on, and then another... and in the dazzling brightness, we were momentarily blinded.

And then color returned, and the backpack emerged out of the darkness. The night sounds momentarily hushed, as we made our way back to our cabins.

And, as it was a summer church camp, after all, we couldn't help but hear these words from Isaiah again:

“The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;

... for the yoke of their burden.. you have broken.”

And while we didn't go into the details with the kids about the political turmoil and war Israel and Judah were experiencing and that Isaiah was referencing in this passage, as we made our way back to the cabins the kids began experimenting with what they could, and what they could not see by the light of a single flashlight. And what they could, and could not see when everyone turned theirs on together.

This month, we have been focusing on the theme of Gratitude. And in sharing our practices of gratitude together, something

amazing is happening here. We have been filled with Awe at the glory of God's creation, at each new sunrise and sunset, noticing and naming the fragility of our humanity even as we place our trust in God. We have been practicing giving and receiving forgiveness, of ourselves and those around us, even as we give thanks to God that such forgiveness is possible. And today, as we ponder just what we can see in the dark, I invite us to think about gratitude through the lens of intention — through the filter of purpose — our purpose, God's purpose.

For our passage from Isaiah today isn't just found in Isaiah. Immediately before our New Testament passage today, Matthew, the composer of this story of the good news we hear today, quotes this passage from Isaiah. At the transitional point when John the Baptist's ministry is ending and Jesus' ministry is just beginning, a light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not over come it. As the inauguration of Jesus' ministry, Matthew tells us who this Jesus is.

And as the Light walks along the shore of Galilee, he calls out to Peter and Andrew, James and John. And dropping their nets and leaving their father behind, they followed him.

They followed him as he taught in the synagogues, proclaimed the good news, and healed every disease and sickness among the people. Can you imagine? The sheer amount of divine power that Jesus was using boggles the mind. For everyone was healed. And to follow in his wake as he taught and announced good news and healed... just, wow.

Being who we are, it is often easier to imagine how hard it must have been to have left the every-day stuff behind to follow the

Light... but how much harder would it be to imagine not being there? Not following the Light that was shining in the darkness, revealing a new path, and leading everyone to a new experience of the holy, eternal, steadfast love of God? Can you imagine not following the Light that came to heal everyone, to witness the compassion God has for each and every one of us?

Now, I know that we are not all Peters, Andrews, James, and John. Some of us are in the synagogues, learning about God when the Light shows up. Some of us are hunched over, simply trying to make it through another day when the Light shows up. Some of us travel from miles around just to see the Light and to bask in its glow while wondering how all these people are well again. And some of us, well some of us are so filled with the darkness and the despair of the land that surrounds us, that we are afraid to open our eyes lest we be blinded by the Light.

For some of us, the darkness is a life experience that appears to limit our choices. For some of us, the darkness is economic hardship. For some of us, the darkness may be addiction, unhealthy relationships, a job that says that we are less than we are, depression, or illness. Some of us create our own darkness, or even open the door to welcome it in.

Regardless of who or where we are, though, the Good News of God is that the Light shines in the Darkness, and the darkness can not overcome it. And for the Light of the World, we give thanks. We give thanks for wisdom, for healing, for relationship. We give thanks for Awe, and Humility, and Forgiveness. We give thanks.

In Robert A Emmon's book, *Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude*

can make you happier, Emmons reflects on Elie Wiesel's practice of gratitude as he emerged from the Kingdom of Night. Holocaust survivor, writer, and Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Wiesel writes of his humiliation, loss of faith, loss of family, and even the loss of the semblance of his humanity ... as he focused each day on his own survival.

In an interview, Oprah Winfrey asked if he still had within him a space for gratitude.

Elie Weisel's response?

*"Absolutely. Right after the war, I went around telling people, "Thank you for just living, for being human." And to this day, the words that come most frequently from my lips are thank you. When a person doesn't have gratitude, something is missing in his or her humanity. A person can almost be defined by his or her attitude toward gratitude... For me, every hour is grace. And I feel gratitude in my heart each time I can meet someone and look at his or her smile."*³

And as we give thanks, we discover ourselves again. We gain a glimpse of who we are through God's eyes. We discover that we have dropped our nets, that we have come to learn or be healed, that we are holding on to the promise of God's Good news. In giving thanks we find ourselves in alignment with God and God's purpose for our lives.

This morning, I have included a slip of paper with our bulletins. A slip that asks us to reflect on two statements about how our

gratitude and our purpose align.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I think of the disciples dropping everything to follow, I can't help but imagine the joy they feel in discovering what they are called by God to do, and then doing it. Now, many of us are older than those first disciples, so we have enough life experience to know that what dropping our nets and following God looks like changes over time. The disciples were called first to follow, to pray, to forgive, and then, as Jesus ascended to the kin-dom of God, to also proclaim the good news. While we are created by God to give thanks to God, what that looks like is different for each and everyone of us. And sharing the ways that God has filled us with gratitude and purpose is important to all of us as we seek to live as God's beloved community together.

So, those slips of paper are designed to help us reflect on that very thing.

1. I am currently giving these gifts to God in alignment with God's purpose for me.
2. I would like to be able to offer these gifts and talents in alignment with God's purpose for me.

(Dad's story?)

And as we worship together, I invite you to ponder these prompts, answer them from the place where you meet the Light of Christ today, and place them in the offering plates as you exit.

For just as campers clump together and follow closely on the heels of the one who carries the flashlight, so we too make our way through this world together, illuminated by the Light of Christ.

We Respond to God's Grace

Prayer

Joys:

English butter toffee, sisters, our volunteers, healthy family, being here, for moms, this church, phone calls with loved ones, friends, lovely holidays, beautiful weather, getting up each morning, grateful to learn about life from my grandma, fellowship, thankful that the Lord listens to prayers whatever they might be, waking up to spouses and loved ones, for heartfelt messages of joy, belief in God, for everyone gathered in our sacred space this morning

Music, kindness, our volunteers who do so much, my healthy family, to be alive, those who light up our lives, love, my belief in God, wonderful friends, visiting family and the joy of coming home, grateful for learning to live a life of joy, coffee and baked goods, playing golf, a place to live, good health, everyone who is here today, the awe of each new day.

Sunshine, rain, quiet still mornings, family, healthy family, wonderful friends, church friends, fog turned to sunshine, friends and neighbors who are like family, sisters, being able to come to church, my dog, being alive, beautiful weather, lovely holiday, getting up in the morning, health, spouse, place to live, the love between spouses and soulmates, grapes and fellowship, belief in God, being able to express ourselves to God, a van that works, love, everything, the beauty of the palms, sunrise, banyan trees, diversity of the congregation, God's new morning painting, the awe of the

**moon shining through the clouds and pointing to the star,
music, kindness, learning to walk backwards, sunshine
through the window and a peaceful household**

Each beautiful new day, slow mornings, gorgeous sunsets, that we are able to celebrate our joys — for celebrating joy reminds us that we share the same source of our joy, the depth of human creativity and spirit, skilled medical professionals, friendship, safe travels, gathering together to study God's word, rebirth and recreation in communities that empower and hold us as we ask tough questions of God and each other, those who pitch in and help out, birthdays, anniversaries, milestones...

When we pray for our loved ones, we have a duty of care to not spread their business without explicit permission. Instead, as we pray, we hold our loved ones close to our heart and lift them up to God, trusting that the Spirit intercedes in all of our prayers, especially those too deep for words.

Intercessions:

Nancy B	Dee	Sheree
Ami	Jimmy	Christine
Barbara T	Stacy	Chet and Kathy
Cerenity's friend		
Kathy, and all of Joanne's family and friends		
Rev. Kim and Darlyne, their family and friends		
The family and friends of Dick Matasek		
Rev. Ryan's her family		
Gay, Vicki, Pam, Jack, Clark, Pastor Attila		

We pray for those people who have lost their jobs and their means of supporting their families, ... pets that need homes

Everyone impacted by the decisions of governments that choose violence and war instead of diplomacy; all essential workers and all frontline healthcare workers; everyone impacted by recent hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, and flooding; and

The staff and participants of Word Made Flesh in Sierra Leone, Immokalee Farm Workers, black and brown fathers and their sons, everyone living through domestic violence, people of all religions who are being persecuted because of their faith, all who struggle with or are affected by mental illness and depression. We also pray for law enforcement officers, service men and women, missionaries and rescue workers doing God's work in dangerous places.

(Fourth Sunday: a new adaptation)

Silent Prayers

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer⁴

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Our Creator, Daddy, Mother, Friend, Rescuer, Protector, Breath that fills us and gives us life, we know that you are found not only on the mountaintops, within the clouds above, or out in the expanse of our universe. We know that you are present with us, choosing to be at-one-with-us in the minutia of our lives as much as you are with the whales giving birth in our oceans and the mountain sheep bounding over the crags. We know that we cannot possibly understand time, space, and relationship in the same way that you do, and are so blessed to be able to know

⁴ John van de Laar <https://sacredise.com/what-life-can-be/>

you the way that a child knows the one who nurtures the life within them.

Hallowed be your name.

We do not call upon you lightly. For you are powerful beyond our imagining. We also bear witness to the ways that you have shown up in our lives and in our community, filling us with good things and helping us to live each day in Joy by giving thanks to you.

Thy Kingdom come,

With you, O Lord, we yearn to see the beauty of our world as you created it:

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We long to be a part of your ongoing creation of all the fruit of Your spirit, knowing that as we gratefully live our lives in alignment with your purpose so your realm becomes visible among us. For the Light of Christ shines in the darkness that surrounds us, and nothing can overcome it.

Give us this day our daily bread

O Lord, we are trying. To give thanks each day for food to eat and a place to stay. But our communities are so fractured. We constantly hear that we can only rely on ourselves, on what we have saved, and hope that it will be enough. Our worst fear is that we become a burden upon those who love us. That we might have to trade our dignity for daily care.

And still, O Lord, we are surrounded by grief, by suffering, and by uncertainty. Are you, Lord, truly here? We come each week to hear and be reminded of the stories of those who trust everything to You. Who simply drop their nets and follow. Teach us, O Lord, that every day with You is enough. That love is never a bother, and that with You and those who love you we are never alone. Fill us with a generous spirit, and help us to see You in the needs of those around us.

Forgive us

Our sins, our debts, our trespasses... We acknowledge the ways that we carelessly hurt others with the words we say, the actions we take, the positions we choose to hold onto as our anchors in this river of life, forgetting that it is You who fill us with streams of living water in the first place. Remind us to value You and each other more than the thoughts that we think. Remind us again that in showing care and compassion for this world You created, we are showing our love and gratitude to You.

As we forgive

Those who have hurt us, whether they know they have hurt us or not. And even when we think it should be obvious to them that they hurt us but we haven't said anything while we wait for the apology that they don't know to offer.

We also vow to keep working to forgive those who seem to delight in hurting others. When pain becomes policy and injustice is heralded as truth, keep us centered in You, forgiven and forgiving.

For Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory

We are here because you formed and shaped us, because you created us yet still want to get to know each of us in the deepest parts of who we are. We praise you for your vision of a new heaven and a new earth, in which everyone treats each other as your beloved children.

Forever,

For even when the day comes that we are no longer the way that we currently are, You Are. And in You we place all our faith, trust, and hope. In your steadfast love, we discover eternal life. Thank you.

Amen. And Amen.

Musical Response

In Gratitude and Humble Trust

Christierson

**In gratitude and humble trust
we bring our best today
to serve your cause and share your love
with all along life's way.**

**O God, who gave yourself to us
in Jesus Christ, your Son,
teach us to give ourselves each day
until life's work is done.**

We Share God's Love

Invitation to Generosity

With gratitude, we offer our gifts—
our resources, our commitments, our lives—
so that the way of compassion may grow wide enough for all.
Let us give with courage and with joy.

(Offering plates are found by each doorway for your use.)

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
praise God all creatures here below,
Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost,

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

**Extravagantly Generous God,
You are the source of every gift and every new beginning.
We give thanks for the joy You are stirring among us
as we act with purpose to dedicate all that we offer You
in service to the work of compassion
that you have entrusted to our care. Amen**

We Go to Carry the Light

***Hymn** “*You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore*”
 v 1 all v 2 spanish v2 English ...

**You have come down to the lakeshore
seeking, neither the wise nor the wealthy,
but only asking for me to follow.**

**O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes;
kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;
now with you I will seek other seas.**

**You know full well my possessions.
neither treasure nor weapons for conquest,
just these my fishnets and will for working.**

**O Jesus, you have looked into my eyes;
kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat;
now with you I will seek other seas.**

*Blessing and Benediction

Beloved of God,

As each new day unfolds,

 may courage rise in you,
 may compassion guide you,
 and joy find room to grow.

Be filled with God's purpose, so that all that you say and all that you do give glory to God, our creator.

Amen.

*Sending Blessing

I Come to You v3

...

**I come to you, the false and failing;
I come to you, the wild and worn;
I come to you, the wronged and railing;
now come to me and be reborn.**

**Leave all you've done, I am forgiving;
leave all you've known to come and see;
leave all you've owned, you're just beginning;
leave all you've been and follow me.**

*Postlude

What a Wonderful World

Thiele/Weiss

***Please remain seated in silence for the Postlude as the
Light of Christ is carried into the world.
The worship has ended; our service begins.***

Supporting Our Service Today

Liturgist: Gary Leidheiser

Welcome Table:

Barbara Martinage

Greeter: Jenny Steindam

Acolyte: Bella Clapham

Head Usher: Harold Steindam

Usher Team: Mel Burrowes,

Phil Enscoe, Jim and Linda

Forristall, Helen Markus, Holly

Vincent

Technology Team

Gary Woodrum, Debra Mensely,

Maria Groody, David Jack,

Linda Newton, Wally Davis,

Patty Fjetland

The **Lord's Table** was decorated

by Victoria Augustine

The **Sanctuary Flowers** are given

by a Friend of VUCC

The **Church Sign** was changed by

Faye Newton & Lisa Sclafani

Sunday Librarian:

Sherry Howe

Fellowship Hosts:

Toni and John Yahres



Senior Minister

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

Staff

Gary Leidheiser: *Custodian*

Barb Quinn: *Office Assistant*

Music Staff

Barbara Quinn: *Music Director*

Lynda Weston: *Bella Handbell Director*

Venice United Church of Christ

620 Shamrock Boulevard

Venice, FL, 34293

Office: 941.493.6741

Email: veniceucc@gmail.com

Website: www.veniceucc.org

This Week at a Glance

Monday, January 26 **SpiritFed at noon**

Pack a lunch and join us **on ZOOM** for prayer, study and connecting with each other. It's a come-as-you-are space designed to help us confront the loneliness epidemic while growing closer to God.

Go to the website, the Connect, or click on the link that you see below.

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83576594637?
pwd=U2024sKmOPiy3CyMqV4OarYUtofaom.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83576594637?pwd=U2024sKmOPiy3CyMqV4OarYUtofaom.1)

Meeting ID: 835 7659 4637

Passcode: 913882

6:30 PM Bridge — P

Tuesday, January 27

9:00 AM Staff Meeting

9:30 AM Leadership Council - CR

5:30 PM Word Made Flesh
Dinner — CR

6:00 PM Girl Scouts

Wednesday, January 28

9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours

10:00 AM Bible Study—CR

3:30 PM Shamrock Ringers NH

6:30 PM Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, January 29

2:00 PM Human Resources —P

4:00 PM Bella Handbells

6:00 PM Daisies

Friday, January 30

8:30 AM Men's Weekly Coffee—
Panera

Sunday, February 2

9:00 AM Choir Rehearsal —S

9:00-9:45 AM Library Hour

10:00 AM Worship

11:00-11:15 AM Library Time

11:15 AM Fellowship Time

Coming Events

Feb 9-13, 8-12 Rummage Sale
prep

Feb 14 8 Rummage Sale

Feb 17 Fat Tuesday Pancakes

Feb 18 Ash Wed service 12:30

Feb 22 Crop Walk

The church office is open
M-Th, 9-1.

Would you like to donate to
VUCC online?

Use this link:

<https://veniceucc.org/give>

Or...Use your Smart Phone
to scan the QR code:

and it will take you
directly to our
donations page.

It is really easy!

