



Venice
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,

Choose To Love

Building a Strong Foundation

Building a Strong Foundation

**Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 3, 2026**

Rev. Barbara Dickason, BCC

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

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Singing Prelude *Sanctuary*

**Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
Pure and holy, tried and true;
with thanksgiving, I'll be a living
sanctuary for you.**

**Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
Pure and holy, tried and true;
with thanksgiving, I'll be a living
sanctuary for you.**

Welcome and Announcements

Good Morning, Venice United Church of Christ. Christ is Risen!

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus who welcomes each and every one of us into this sacred space. I am Pastor Barb, and Rev. Dr. Larry Washburn will be our liturgist and is assisting with Communion today. Many thanks to all of our staff and volunteers for all that they have done this week so that we could come together to worship God.

Beautifying our sanctuary today, we have flowers given by by Patty Fjetland and Linda Newton in Celebration of the 4th Wedding Anniversary of Lisa Sclafani and Faye Newton, who have been together for 49 years.

For those of us who are worshipping online, whether today or some point in the future, I invite you to like us, share us, and 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 notated 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. As a Wise Congregation for Mental Health, we invite everyone to wear a name tag, so that we can call each other by name.

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.

There are a few coming events of which to take note.

On Monday, SpiritFed. Our Wednesday Bible Study The Men are meeting Friday morning at Panera, and the KnitWits will gather in the parlor.

...

There are many ways to get involved here at Venice UCC, whether through activities, volunteering for special projects or helping with our mission projects, or serving on a team or committee. Please check out the information table to explore new ways to become connected to the ministries of our church.

... Building a strong foundation, beginning with love and Bell Hook's book ...

and worship our extravagantly generous, steadfastly loving God.
May our worship align us again with God's holy purpose — to
love one another as Christ loves us.

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

Jesus Loves Me

Bradbury

Responsive Call to Worship

Do not let your hearts be troubled—though the night feels long
and the way unclear.

**We come carrying questions, uncertainties,
and hopes we can barely name.**

There is a place being prepared—not far away,
but within the heart of God.

A place of belonging, a dwelling of love, a home with open doors.

When we ask, “How can we know the way?”

Christ answers not with directions,
but with presence.

**“I am the way,” he says—
the path beneath our feet,
the truth within our living,
the life that will not end.**

So come—come to trust again, to love again,
to build our lives on what endures.

We come, for God makes places for us all.

And in that love, we come to worship.

*Hymn *Si ya Hamba* ...

Si-ya-ham-ba Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos,

Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.

Si-ya-ham-ba, Oo-Oo, Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.

Si-ya-ham-ba, Oo-Oo, Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.

We are mar-ching in the light of God.

We are marching in the light of God.

We are mar-ching in the light of God.

**We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching ...Oo-Oo,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching ...Oo-Oo,
We are marching in the light of God.
Si-ya-ham —ba Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos,
Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.
Si-ya-ham —ba Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos,
Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.
Si-ya-ham-ba—, Oo-Oo,
Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.
Si-ya-ham-ba—, Oo-Oo,
Si-ya-ham-ba, Koo-ken-yen kwen-kos.**

***Prayer for Transformation and New Life**

Let us pray:

God of the open door, God of the many rooms,
God who makes space where we see none—

meet us here, in the unsettled places of our hearts.

We confess that we are often a troubled people—

clinging to what we can control, afraid of what we cannot see,
uncertain of the way ahead.

Our hearts wander. Our trust wavers.

We search for maps instead of relationship,
certainty instead of presence, answers instead of love.

Forgive us, O God.

When fear becomes our foundation, rebuild us in Christ.

**When love remains only a feeling,
teach us to live it—in action, in courage, in truth.**

When we close our ears to the cries of others,
open us again to compassion that moves and heals.

**When we cannot see the way, remind us—
the Way walks with us.**

Breathe your Spirit into our troubled hearts. Plant our feet firmly on rock
**Until our lives become a dwelling place for your love—
strong, spacious, and alive in Christ.**

***Words of Grace**

Hear the Good News:

When our hearts are troubled, Christ meets us on our roads of fear,
on the road of uncertainty, and even at the edge of death, saying,
'You are held in God's Love'.

**In Christ, we are forgiven, renewed, and made ready to love again.
Amen.**

***Response**

I Love to Tell the Story

Hankey/Fisher

**I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

**I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.**

Service of Blessing

Pastor Barb: Siblings in Christ, it is an honor to be entrusted with responsibility for a particular service in the ministry of the church, whether gathered or scattered. Jenny, having prayerfully considered the duties and responsibilities of your ministry in Sierra Leone with Word Made Flesh, are you prepared to serve with the help of God in Christ's name and for the glory of God?

Jenny: I am.

Pastor Barb: Do you promise to exercise your ministry diligently and faithfully, living the love of Christ out loud?

Jenny: I do, relying on God's Grace.

Rev. Bob Zittel: Beloved community of God, you have heard the promises of our sister, who is answering God's continuing call to service. Let us affirm our intention to live in covenant with her. Will you join in sharing our commitment to love, support, and pray for Jenny in her mission?

Congregation:

**We gather in celebration of the joy that is ours
as partners with you in the service of Jesus Christ. We
faithfully promise to love you, honor your leadership,
assist you, and keep you in our prayers.**

Pastor Barb: May the Holy Spirit strengthen and equip you with every good thing as you go out from among us to serve. May God bless you with wisdom and vision as you seek to fulfill the mission set before you.

Rev. Zittel:

Let us pray...

Eternal God,

You have called our sister to serve you in this family of faith and in the world. Send your Holy Spirit upon her so that she may serve with honor and faithfulness. Help her to be diligent in her duties, that your church may prosper in the mission you place before it.

May her example prove worthy for all of us to follow, as we are united in the body of Christ to the glory of your name. Amen

Pastor Barb: In the name of Jesus the Christ, and on behalf of the people of Venice United Church of Christ, I rejoice to proclaim that you are recognized and affirmed in your ministry in Sierra Leone.

We Encounter God in the Word

Contemplative Reading *All About Love: New Visions* bell hooks

“Imagine how much easier it would be for us to learn how to love if we began with a shared definition. The word “love” is most often defined as a noun, yet all the more astute theorists of love acknowledge that we would all love better if we used it as a verb. I spent years searching for a meaningful definition of the word “love,” and was deeply relieved when I found one in psychiatrist M. Scott Peck’s classic self-help book *The Road Less Traveled*, first published in 1978. Echoing the work of Erich Fromm, he defines love as “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.” Explaining further, he continues: “Love is as love does. Love is an act of will—namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love.” Since the choice must be made to nurture growth, this definition counters the more widely accepted assumption that we love instinctually.”¹

God is Still Speaking. **Thanks be to God!**

Anthem

At the Table of the Lord

Althouse

¹ bell hooks. *All About Love: New Visions* Pg 35.

1-7 "Don't let your hearts be troubled.
You have faith in God;
have faith in me as well.

In God's house there are many dwelling places;
otherwise, how could I have told you
that I was going to prepare a place for you?

I am indeed going to prepare a place for you,
and then I will come back to take you with me,
that where I am
there you may be as well.

You know the way that leads to where I am going."

Thomas replied, "But we don't know where you're going.
How can we know the way?"

Jesus told him,
"I myself am the Way—
I am Truth,
and I am Life.
No one comes to Abba God
but through me.
If you really knew me,
you would know Abba God also.
From this point on,
you know Abba God
and you have seen God."

8-9 "Rabbi," Philip said, "show us Abba God, and that will be
enough for us."

Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and still

you don't know me?

Whoever has seen me has seen Abba God.
How can you say, 'Show us your Abba'?

¹⁰⁻¹⁴ Don't you believe that I am in Abba God
and God is in me?

The words I speak are not spoken of myself;
it is Abba God, living in me,
who is accomplishing the works of God.
Believe me that I am in God and God is in me,
or else believe because of the works I do.

The truth of the matter is,
anyone who has faith in me
will do the works I do—
and greater works besides.

Why? Because I go to Abba God,
and whatever you ask in my name I will do,
so that God may be glorified in me.

Anything you ask in my name
I will do.

The Word of the God. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray:

For the words of challenge,
for the words of blessing,
for the spirit of wisdom moving in our midst,
we give you honor and thanks and praise. Amen

There is a moment in All About Love when bell hooks reflects on how many of us grow up learning a version of love that is anything but loving. She tells the truth plainly: we are taught that love is something we feel, not something we do. And because of that, we learn to tolerate things that wound us—silence, distance, fear—while still calling it love.

She describes sitting in spaces where people said “I love you,” but their actions communicated something else entirely. Control. Withdrawal. Indifference. And she realized something that unsettled her deeply: if love is real, it cannot coexist with a persistent refusal to care, to listen, to show up.

I remember a conversation with someone who had been caring for a loved one through a long illness. They told me, “I keep waiting to feel strong enough. I keep thinking that if I really loved them well, I wouldn’t feel so afraid all the time.”

And then they paused. “But I am afraid. All the time.”

Maybe you know that feeling.

You want to love well.

You want to show up.

You want to trust.

But your heart feels... unsettled.

Troubled.

Not because you don't love—but because you do.

Because love, when it is real, opens us. It makes us vulnerable. It exposes how much we cannot control. It brings us face to face with uncertainty—with loss, with change, with the unknown.

And suddenly, we find ourselves standing in a place we never expected: loving deeply, and yet carrying a heart that feels anything but at peace.

It is into that very human place that Jesus speaks.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

We are in this season of Easter, a season where resurrection joy meets the reality of living. The disciples have witnessed Christ's presence among them—and now they are figuring out what it means to live faithfully.

This week, as we begin our movement into “Building a Strong Foundation,” we are invited to notice something essential: a strong foundation is not built on the absence of fear.

It is built on how we live within it.

Having “Troubled Hearts” is not a failure of faith. It is the starting point of it.

Because every one of us knows what it is to carry a troubled heart —when the future feels uncertain, when relationships strain, when grief lingers, when the ground beneath us shifts.

And the question is not: How do we get rid of troubled hearts?
The question is: What holds us when our hearts are troubled?

Jesus does not ignore the fear.
He speaks directly into it.

In John's Gospel, this morning's scripture does not come out of nowhere.

It comes after a rupture. Judas has left the table. Jesus has spoken of betrayal. Jesus has just told his disciples that he will only be with them a little while longer, and that where he is going they cannot follow.

And into that moment, Jesus offers these words, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

And Peter, wanting to know where Jesus is going, is told that that he will deny even knowing Jesus. Jesus has just told his disciples how they will be known, and then Jesus tells Peter he will claim not to be his follower. And then he continues: 'for while you will not follow me this time, you will follow me later.'

The disciples can feel it: something is ending. Jesus is giving final instructions, betrayal and denial are looming, and the room is thick with confusion and fear.

And into that very human space Jesus speaks "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

Not as a command to suppress emotion—but as an invitation into trust.

"Believe in God. Believe also in me."

He begins to reframe everything they think they know about presence and absence. He speaks of "many dwelling places"—

not as distant real estate in heaven, but as a way of saying: You will not be abandoned. Your relationship with me will not end. It will change.'

Thomas, honest as ever, voices what the others are thinking: "We do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" And Jesus responds with words that have echoed through centuries: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Not a map. Not a set of directions. A relationship. The way forward is not something to figure out—it is someone to follow.

Philip presses further: "Show us the Father."

And Jesus gently responds, "Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me?"

Because the disciples are looking for certainty. Clarity. Proof. And Jesus offers something deeper: presence. "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father."

In other words, everything you need to know about God—God's love, God's character, God's heart—has already been revealed as faithful followers of Christ share the stories — as they bear witness — to the ways they are seeing the revelation of God's presence around and within us.

This is not about escaping troubled hearts. It is about being held within them.

And then, Jesus takes them another step deeper: "The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do—and, in fact, will do greater works than these."

Greater works?

Not because they are more powerful—but because they will be multiplied. Because love, when it is faithfully lived, expands.

And this is where faith begins to take shape—not as agreement, but as embodied trust. A trust that will, inevitably, put the disciples at odds with the world around them.

We see that fully in our passage from Acts.

Stephen is a follower whose faithfulness mirrored Christ's own as he traveled the countryside sharing the Good News. Due to his willingness to share the story of what he saw and was a part of, due to his willingness to witness to the revelation of the Divine within Christ and actively present within and among the members of the early church, Stephen's words have prompted many to choose to also become followers of Christ. But through the power of his witness, he ends up affronting the religious leaders of the time, and he is brought before them for their judgment.

And there he stands. Stephen stands before a crowd filled with anger and accusation. His faithfulness has brought him to a moment where everything is at stake. The end of his earthly life is rapidly approaching. And yet, in that moment, he sees the same vision that was revealed at Christ's own crucifixion.

And to all those gathered there to stone him, he shared his witness: "The heavens opened."

"I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

And even as stones are thrown, even as his body is breaking, his words echo the very heart of Christ: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

This is not passive belief. This is not denial of suffering. This is love that holds even in the midst of it. This is active, embodied

faithfulness that offers forgiveness even when the religious leaders close their ears to God's voice. This is a faithfulness that refuses to abandon love—even when the cost is real.

And it reveals a heart that is not free from trouble—but grounded in something deeper.

In *All About Love*, bell hooks defines love not as a feeling, but as “the will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth.”

That definition matters.

Because it shifts love from something passive to something active.

From something we wait to feel... to something we choose to practice.

Research in psychology echoes this. When we understand love as action—care, commitment, presence—it becomes something that can sustain us even when emotions fluctuate.

In fact, studies on resilience show that meaning-making and relational connection are key to navigating uncertainty. We are not steadied by eliminating fear—but by being anchored in relationships that embody care and trust.

This aligns deeply with our passage from John.

Jesus does not remove the disciples' fear.

He redefines their foundation.

Love becomes the practice of presence.

Trust becomes relational, not circumstantial. And suddenly, a troubled heart is no longer a sign that something is wrong. It

becomes the very place where love is lived.

This morning, our scripture tells a story that helps us make sense of How, or... the Way... we are living. Without them, our experiences remain scattered—moments without meaning.

But when we tell our stories, when we choose to bear witness to the presence of God among and within us, the Divine love that we are bearing witness to begins to shift something within and around us.

We begin to recognize connection.

We begin to notice where love has been present—even when we didn't have language for it at the time.

bell hooks writes about how healing begins when we tell the truth about our lives—especially about love. Not the idealized version. Not the version we wish were true. But the real one.

Where we were afraid.

Where we were hurt.

Where we kept showing up anyway.

That is where our formation and re-formation into followers of Christ happens. Because when we share those stories in community, when we witness to the presence of God within and among us, we begin to realize something profound: We are not alone in our troubled hearts.

And more than that—we begin to see how God has been present in ways we did not fully recognize in the moment. Stories do not remove the trouble. They reveal the presence within it.

So what might this look like for us this week—especially if we take seriously that faith is not just comfort, but commitment?

Biblical Scholar Timothy Hare reminds us that “faithfulness to God may clash with the common assumptions and practices of modern culture.” And that matters—because much of what our culture teaches us about love and security pulls us in the opposite direction of the gospel.

We are told to protect ourselves. To avoid discomfort. To prioritize convenience. But faithful practice calls us somewhere deeper. Like Stephen, we must measure our priorities, choose when to take a stand, and to express our beliefs through action, wherever that might lead.”

So begin here.

Begin by practicing honest courage.

Notice where your faith might be inviting you to act—even if it feels uncomfortable. Where is love asking more of you than ease would allow?

Then, practice love as a visible choice. Not just in feeling—but in action. A conversation you’ve been avoiding. A boundary that reflects care. A step toward justice, compassion, or truth.

Because love, as bell hooks reminds us, is something we do.

And finally, practice grounded trust. When your heart feels troubled—not if, but when—pause and remember: You are not being asked to eliminate fear. You are being invited to remain faithful within it. To choose love anyway. To act anyway.

To trust that even when faithfulness feels costly, it is building something stronger than comfort ever could.

A foundation that holds, even and especially when we have troubled hearts.

So this coming week, Remember Jesus' words, and "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Not because there is nothing to fear. But because love is here.

The same love that sat at the table with the disciples.
The same love that stood with Stephen.
The same love that calls us — not just to feel, but to live it.

Even when it is difficult.
Even when it sets us apart.
Even when our hearts tremble.

Because our invitation is not to have an untroubled heart.
But to trust that even here—especially here—God is present.
Holding. Guiding. Loving.

Because even in a troubled heart, love is taking shape.
And a foundation is being built—one faithful act at a time.
Amen.

We Respond to God's Grace

Congregational Prayers

Joys

...

What a wonderful world with God in it. 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 far away 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:

Fred	Barbara	Ellen
Anthony	Steve	Kip
Kristin	Adam	Family and friends of Susan
Family and friends of Nancy		Nora
Emily	Helga	
Cerenity	Rev. Ryan’s family	
Basha	Ami	
Jimmy, Christine, Mark, Helen, Gay, Stacy, Vicki, Pam, Jack, Rick, Clark, Barbara, Pastor Atilla		

Those who are struggling with a cancer diagnosis.

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.

(First Sunday: sung)

Silent Prayer

Prayers of the People and our Lord's Prayer²

Holy One,

Active God of compassion and refuge,

When our hearts are troubled, draw us back to the strong foundation of your love. We come carrying questions like Thomas, longing like Philip, courage like Stephen, and fears we do not always know how to name. Remind us that Christ is not only the way ahead, but the presence beside and within us.

Teach us to love as Jesus loves: not only in word or feeling, but in action, truth, forgiveness, and mercy. Build us into a people whose lives bear witness to your grace, whose compassion makes room for others, and whose faith stands firm even when the world feels unsteady.

We pray this morning for those who are grieving, for those who are suffering, for those who are sitting in that place of waiting and not knowing. Soothe our fears, nourish our bodies, and feed our souls with the bread and cup of your compassion and mercy.

We praise you for your vision of a new heaven and a new earth, in which everyone treats each other as your beloved children, as together we sing the prayer that you have taught us:

**Our Father, which 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**

We Share God's Love

Invitation to Generosity

bell hooks reminds us that love is not simply a feeling, but an action. Jesus tells his disciples that those who trust him will continue his works.

Our giving is one way love becomes visible.

Through these gifts, we help build a community grounded in compassion, welcome, justice, and care.

As we offer what we have, we join Christ's work of making room for everyone at the table.

(The offering plates are found by each doorway for your use. For those of us online, please follow the QR code.)

***Song of Gratitude**

Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above, ye heavenly host,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication**

God of love,

Receive these gifts as signs of our trust.

Use them to steady troubled hearts,

to shelter the vulnerable,

to strengthen this community,

and to build your house of mercy among us.

May our generosity become love in action.

In Christ's name, Amen.

Invitation to Holy Communion³

Friends, this is Christ's table—

not a table of perfection, but a table of love.

Here, troubled hearts find rest.

Here, questions are welcomed.

Here, there is room—always more room.

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.”

And then he sat at a table with his friends,

offering bread, offering cup, offering himself.

So come—not because you have it all figured out, but because Christ invites you. For all are welcome at this table of grace.

On the night before love was tested,

Jesus gathered with his friends—

friends with troubled hearts,

friends who did not yet understand.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and said:

“This is my body, given for you.

Whenever you eat it, remember me.”

(Break bread) At this table, all the various ingredients of this gluten-free bread were grown with patience, tenderness and love. They were then gathered and baked into a loaf to be broken and shared together. This bread is a sign: that even what is broken can become a place where God is revealed

³ Adapted from **What Is Good: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany** was written by Rev. Teña T. Nock, Associate Pastor of Digital Ministry, First United Church of Tampa, UCC <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/after-epiphany-4a-february-1/>

And after supper, Jesus took the cup, saying:

*“This cup is the new covenant in love—
poured out for you and for many.
Whenever you drink it, remember me.”*

(Pour cup) At this table, the grapes used to prepare this cup were pruned and fertilized, gathered by the hands of migrant workers and pressed into the juice that we share together. This cup is a promise: That love is stronger than death, and that God’s life is poured out for all.

Let us pray:

God of abiding presence,

pour out your Spirit upon this bread and this cup, that they may be for us the presence of Christ— the Way that steadies us, the truth that grounds us, the life that renews us.

And pour out your Spirit upon us—that we may be the body of Christ in the world: people who love not only in word, but in action; people who make room for others; people who bear witness with courage and grace.

Unite us with Christ, with one another, and with all who hunger for love that does not fail. Amen.

Come, for the meal is ready!

*(The ministers and servers will prepare the elements;
the congregation is then invited to come
and receive the bread and the cup.
If you cannot come but wish to receive,
the servers will come to you.)*

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God,

We give you thanks for this meal of love.

**You have met us in our uncertainty
and fed us with your presence.**

**Now prepare us to go out to build our lives on your love,
to steady troubled hearts, and to be witnesses—**

in word and in action— to the grace we have received.

In Christ, the Way, Amen.

We Go to Carry the Light

***Hymn**

I Eat this Bread

**I eat this bread, I eat this bread,
I eat this bread in remembrance of you. (Repeat)**

**I drink this cup, I drink this cup,
I drink this cup in remembrance of you. (Repeat)**

**I praise your name, I praise your name,
I praise your name, I praise your name. (Repeat)**

***(stand here) Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (Repeat)**

***Blessing and Benediction**

Go now with hearts grounded in Christ.

When the way is unclear, trust the One who is the way; when love is needed, make it visible in your words, your courage, and your care. Amen.

***Sending Blessing**

Threefold Amen

Danish

***Postlude**

Allegro Maestoso

Handel from *Water Music*

**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: Rev. Dr. Larry
Washburn

Welcome Table: Nancy Brex

Greeters: John Brex

Acolyte: Bella Clapham

Head Usher: Dee Rogers

Usher Team: Nancy Bennet,
Mel Burrowes, Phil Ensue,
Chet Hamlin, Helen Markus

Technology Team

Gary Woodrum, Debra Mosely,
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 by Patty Fjetland and Linda
Newton in Celebration of the 4th
Wedding Anniversary of Lisa
Sclafani and Faye Newton, who
have been together for 49 years.

The **Church Sign** was changed by
Faye Newton & Lisa Sclafani

Sunday Librarian:

Ellen Schleicher

Fellowship Hosts:

Mel Burrowes and Helen Markus



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*

This Week at a Glance

Monday, April 6

12:00 Noon Spirit Fed Bible
Study via Zoom

Tuesday, April 7

9:00 AM Staff Meeting
9:30 AM AAUW Board - P
6:00 PM Girl Scouts

Wednesday, April 8

9:00 AM - Noon Library Hours
10:00 AM Bible Study—CR
1:00 Cut-Ups — CR
6:30 Choir Rehearsal
7:00 NAMI — CR

Thursday, April 9

6:00 Daisies

Friday, April 10

8:30 AM Men's Coffee—Panera
9:00 AM Knit Wits — Parlor

Sunday, April 12

Sixth Sunday of Easter

9:00 AM Choir Rehearsal — S
9:00-9:45 AM Library Hour
10:00 AM Worship
11:00-11:15 AM Library Time
Fellowship Time Follows Worship

Coming Events

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

Would you like to donate to
VUCC online?

Use this link:

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to scan the QR code:

and it will take you
directly to our
donations page.

It is really easy!

