

THE
Federated Church
OF SYCAMORE



everything
[in] between

Meeting God in the midst of extremes

Lent 2025

Responding to God's Invitation

Prayer Stations at home for online worshippers

Lent is an invitation to journey through the things we tend to avoid—our doubts, fears, griefs, wounds, and even death. This Lent, though, we are inviting you to hold the “both/and” of life—for even amidst our doubts, we do believe in something; in the face of fear, we experience courage; our wounds can make way for connection; and even death can be the seedbed for new life. Let's meet God here, in the midst of life's polarities.

During this time (~10 min), people in the sanctuary will be visiting various prayer stations. While we can't re-create that experience for you at home, here are some ways you can use this time to create sacred space and connection for yourself wherever you are!

Waiting in the Wilderness: Some seasons of life feel like wilderness wandering. Even here, God is present. We, too, are invited to be present—even here.

Meditate on the poem (p. 6 in the bulletin). This will be a new poem each week. As you read, notice what word jumps out at you; what feeling(s) arise(s) in you.

When you finish, take a few slow deep breaths and read the poem again. This time, listen for how these words are calling you to action. Reflect on the prompt beneath the poem.

Divine Seeing: *Pause to look more deeply at the artwork (on p. 7) inspired by today's scripture. As you do, ponder the questions and Artist's Statement (p. 8) beneath it.*

Prayer Candles: Lighting candles as one prays for a loved one or a people / place around the world who are weary, war-torn, grieving, or suffering is an ancient spiritual practice. *Find a candle, bring it into your space with you and, as you light it, offer any prayers for yourself, loved ones, or people around the world.*

Table of Offering: We are grateful to continue expanding our accessibility online, growing our intergenerational community in person, and offering a bold witness of love and justice in the wider world. As a small church/nonprofit, none of this is possible without many donations, large and small. Your donations to the “general fund” will especially help us enhance our growing children's ministries and accessibility for young families. *If our worship or ministries have blessed you, we invite you to consider making a donation to support them or our Love Offering partner through [this link](#).*

Practices for Living in the Messy Middle: In Lent, we intentionally focus on practices that help us live more fully amidst the mess, brokenness, and uncertainty, trusting that as we do, healing, hope, and new life *will* emerge—even here. [Click here](#) for an e-reader version of our Lenten devotional filled with poetry, art, question prompts, and short essay reflections. Commit to using this devotional as a spiritual practice during Lent. Use the question prompts to deepen conversation with a partner, friend, or (grand)child!

Order of Worship | March 23, 2025, 10:00 am

All music can be found at the back of the bulletin.

Prelude

“Adoration”

Mark Hayes

Gathering For Worship

Welcome

Passing the Peace *We invite you to like the video and/or say “Hi!” in the comments to let us know you’re here.*

Gathering Song “Come and Find the Quiet Center” (p.2)

Centering Our Hearts

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer & The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father/Mother/Parent who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kin(g)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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Song of Illumination “Trust the Work” (p.2)

Scripture

[Luke 13:6-19](#)

Sermon

“Rest AND Growth”

Sung Response “Beautiful Things” (p.3)

Responding to God’s Invitation: Prayer Stations *(see inside bulletin cover)*

Preparing to Live God’s Love

Our Shared Life

Sending Song “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” (p.4)

Benediction

Postlude

“Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” *Picardy/arr. M. Hayes*
Thank you for joining us for worship today!

“Come and Find the Quiet Center” by Shirley Erena Murray

1. Come and find the quiet center in the crowd-ed life we lead, find the
 2. Si-lence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace, God it
 3. In the Spir - it let us trav - el, o - pen to each oth - er's pain, let our
 room for hope to en - ter, find the frame where we are freed: Clear the
 is who speaks and names us, knows our be - ing, touch-es grace, mak-ing
 loves and fears un - rav - el, cel - e - brate the space we gain: There's a
 cha - os and the clut - ter, clear our eyes that we can see all the
 space with - in our think - ing, lift - ing shades to show the sun, rais - ing
 place for deep - est dream - ing, there's a time for heart to care, in the
 things that real - ly mat - ter, be at peace, and sim - ply be.
 cour - age when we're shrink - ing, find - ing scope for faith be - gun.
 Spir - it's live - ly schem - ing, there is al - ways room to spare.

“Trust the Work” by Paul M. Vasile

Trust the work. Trust the slow work. Trust the
 slow work of God with - in you.

"Beautiful Things" by Michael & Lisa Gungor

1. All this pain. —
All this earth. —

I won-der if I'll ev - er find my way; — I won-der if my
Could all that is lost ev - er be found; — could a gar-den

life could real - ly change _ at _ all. _____
come up from this ground _ at _ all? _____

chorus

You make beau - ti - ful things, —

You make beau - ti - ful things out of the dust. —

You make beau - ti - ful things, — You make beau - ti - ful things out of us. —

2. All a - round _____ hope is spring - ing

up from this old ground. — Out of cha - os, life is be - ing found —

in _____ You. _____

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower” by Natalie Sleeth

UNISON



1 In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;
2 There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;
3 In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;



in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise: but - ter - flies will soon be free!
there's a dawn for ev - ery dark - ness, bring - ing hope to you and me.
in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.



In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,
From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,
In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,



un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.
un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.
un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

† † †

WORSHIP NOTES

Serving us this morning are:

Pastor: Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Ministers:** All of us! | **Music Director:** Gary Mattin
Children's Church Director: Bill O'Hagan | **Childcare Support:** Janis Schnurr-Trebe
Liturgist: Sheldon Turner | **Ushers:** Paula von Ende, and Bev & Skip Schramer
Ushers for Sunday, March 30: Alice Whitney, and Bev & Skip Schramer

All hymns this morning are used with permission: CCLI License #3234671

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Intergenerational All-Church Lenten Retreat | *Sat. 04/05, 10AM-2PM*

Mark your calendars (Note the date change!) and plan to join us for this **inter-generational Lenten retreat** filled with meaningful small group conversation, time for silent reflection or spiritual practices, and making art. Some parts will include children and adults working together in the same space, and some will be separate. **Lunch will be provided.** Suggested donation is \$5/person for adults; kids are free. RSVP in Dutton Hall or in the eNews.

March Love Offering | *One Great Hour of Sharing*

Give to the **“Be the Light” One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)** special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. Your donation helps with food insecurity, disaster relief, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. See the *“Table of Offering” Prayer Station* for more info and to donate.

Maundy Thursday Dinner & Service | *Thursday, April 17, 5:30-7:30 PM*

Join us for our intergenerational Maundy Thursday service, beginning with dinner at 5:30pm in Dutton Hall. When the adults move into the sanctuary, children will go to the Chapel with Mr. Bill to engage the rest of the story in a developmentally appropriate way.

Many hands make this evening possible! Please consider volunteering as part of the MT Dinner Planning Ministry Team (help with decorating, food pick-up/prep, serving and clean-up). Contact Paula von Ende with questions. Indicate that you can help when you RSVP online or in Dutton Hall.

Weekly eNews

Scan this QR code with your phone camera to see the most recent eNews with all these announcements and more! Subscribe tab is at the top.





everything [in] between

Meeting God in the midst of extremes

Waiting in the Wilderness

“Slow Growth”

There's a vine in the South that covers everything.
It chokes out the light. Grows up to twelve inches per day.
In a matter of years, it will blanket a forest.
If you saw it from space, you'd marvel at its reach.
If you saw it from the passenger seat, you'd weep at what it covers.
Those looking for fast shade plant this invasive vine.
Who can blame them? We're all impatient.
But if it's fruit you want—
the tart cherry,
the sticky sweet kumquat,
the soft side of a peach,
the crisp bite of an apple—
then bless the rain.
Thank the sun.
Put your hands in the dirt,
and wait.

by Rev. Sarah Speed

Where am I on the spectrum?

As you ponder this week's polarities—*rest & growth*—consider where you would place yourself. Do you feel more strongly aligned to one end or the other, or more in the middle?

Consider how your location on the spectrum reflects where you are in your faith journey. Is your current location different from previous seasons of life? Is God calling you to move in a particular direction now?

Take this insert home with you and offer a prayer asking God to grant you what you need as you journey ahead.

rest-----growth





THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
everything [in] between rest & growth



Fig Leafing

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Luke 13:6-9

Paper lace and watercolor

At our church retreat a few months ago, we offered a session on eco-spirituality. Our instructor led an exercise that focused our attention on a single, natural object. I selected a wilted flower. We were to draw it, then tell its narrative. We were to refer to it as a “one.” This one. We were to affirm the one and be affirmed by the one.

That exercise resonates with me here as I revisit the parable of the fig tree. In this circular image, two figures lean in over the tree; their

heads are full of ideas for fruiting, their bodies are full of dead fig leaf patterns.⁵ Their ideas and dreams have not born fruit. They converse about how to cultivate growth. Then one pushes back against the other and creates tension, discord. From that tension comes an opening, letting the fig tree have its time and space to thrive.

In this paper lace piece, the fig tree is full of life, representing its potential when given the time and space to grow. As I wonder about God’s presence here in the parable, I see that the God figure could be the fig tree. “Let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it,”⁶ the vineyard keeper replies. As I breathe into the gift of another day, where do I see potential in need of my honor, my care, and the space and time to grow?

Or perhaps the God figure here is in the space between them all, between the three. The fig tree, this one, begins its leafing in the in-between. —Hannah Garrity

⁵ The two circular shapes with fruit seeds inside of them represent the figures’ heads; the branch-like imagery beneath the heads represent their shoulders.

⁶ Luke 13:8, NRSV

OUR FEDERATED VALUES

We believe in God

At the center of our faith is the surprising, unsettling, and deeply personal God found in the Bible, most profoundly revealed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At Federated, our primary interest is not merely talking *about* God, but in *encountering* the Mysterious Force at the heart of the universe. This is a God who comforts us where we need to be comforted and challenges us where we've become complacent. This is a God who will not be confined to dogmatic teachings, nor even to the Bible. We believe that we are invited to encounter this God everywhere: in nature, science, one another, and in other religious traditions as well.

We believe each person is on a unique spiritual journey

We value faith as a journey rather than a destination. We recognize that each person is at a different place on their journey, so we focus on “testimonies” of faith rather than “tests” of faith; stories of how we are being transformed, rather than dogmas we must affirm. Here, you are welcome to belong, question, explore, and lead whether you grew up in church and loved it, or you've had a painful relationship with Christianity; you are welcome whether you feel your faith is unshakeable or you're not sure if you believe in God at all. You are welcome to join a community of people “on the way”: encouraging and caring for one another, learning and growing together, and serving alongside each other as we build, in some small way, the world we believe God dreams of.

We believe in building authentic community across our differences

We are an “Open and Affirming” congregation, which is our way of saying that we value diversity. In a time of deep division, we believe it is paramount to gather people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and identities in order to build authentic relationships and community. We believe that the simple but courageous work of showing up and being together in this way is one necessary element in healing our nation and world's deep divisions.

We believe in working for peace through justice

In this congregation, conversations regarding racism, sexism, poverty, war, immigration, homophobia, hunger, abuse, and a host of other issues are commonplace, both from the pulpit and around the table. We know that the Realm of God is not being experienced on earth so long as people are being hurt. With Martin Luther King Jr., we believe that we are all “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny,” and that “none of us can be free until all are free.” Which means that, as a community, we have a God-given responsibility and mission to work for justice and healing in our neighborhood and beyond. Jesus says: “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This work is defined not merely by what we are against, but the vision we are for—flourishing for *all!*

“Welcoming Any, Loving All”

*The Federated Church is affiliated with two national denominations:
the United Church of Christ & the Unitarian Universalist Association*



Follow us on
Facebook & Instagram:
@FederatedChurchSycamore



www.fedsycamore.org

Church Office Phone: (815) 895-2706 || **Email:** Office@fedsycamore.org

Pastor Eric Cell: (815) 797-2250 || **Email** RevEric@fedsycamore.org

Director of Children’s Church: Bill O’Hagan

Childcare Support: Janis Schnurr-Trebe

Federated Church Preschool, Director Bobbi Clough

Phone: (815) 764-9473 || **Email:** Preschool@fedsycamore.org

Address: 612 W. State Street, Sycamore, IL 60178