



*March 5, 2023
Greenfield Charge United Church of Christ*

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Lenten Meditation

In the new birth, God takes your unique individuality and gives you a new disposition so that you can begin to live for His glory. There is no other Christian in the world like you.

– Colin Smith
Ten Keys to Unlock the Christian Life (2005)

Community News

Prayer List and Prayers of the People

Prelude/Lighting of the Candles

* *Call to Worship*

From the safety and comfort of home, God called Abram to go from all he knew to embrace a future yet to be revealed.

“Go from,” God says, and our hesitant hearts place one foot in front of the other to trust God with the unknown.

By night, Nicodemus came seeking greater insight into the teachings of God for the journey set before him. Jesus called him out of the shadows and towards a life born anew.

“Go towards” God says, and a new life awaits us. We reach towards a God who has not come to condemn the world but to offer a salve that can heal all wounds.

We fear the unknown and that which we lack in understanding.

“How can this be?” we proclaim with Nicodemus. And yet, God’s call is one that urges us to go with our whole self into that unknowing, trusting that God will provide a way.

Love calls us forth into lives of transformation, born anew into new paths of faith. Though we do not know where we are going, God has promised to never leave us alone. Let us worship the One who will show us the way.

* *Invocation*

God of calls and courage, you draw us towards your loving embrace even as we face what seems like impossibility. We experience heartache and grief, injustice and cruelty, fear and anxiety as daily teachers on this path of faith. As you call us to go into an uncertain and unknown future, O God, grant us the courage needed to let go of all that we have known so that we can take hold of the new life you are bringing about even now. Though we may not know where we are going, God, your way is revealed moment

by moment, step by step, and breath by breath. In the name of the One who so loves the world we pray. Amen.

* *Opening Hymn*

“My Faith Looks Up To Thee”

VH #248

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

O God, we all too often wish to go our own way, maintain control, and rely on our own strength rather than trust that you will provide. Forgive us in our unwillingness to live by faith or for not putting our trust in you with providing all that we need for the journey.

May God’s mercy surround our weaknesses with grace for restoring us to hope everlasting.

Words of Grace

Friends, the call of God does not leave us isolated and condemned on a road of uncertainty, fear, and mistakes made. God’s unending love and compassion is for all whose burdens are heavy and whose weary journey brings tears. May the tender arms of God carry you forth in strength.

God has not come to condemn, but to offer a healing salve for our wounds. We welcome God’s healing and salvation through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 12:1-4a NIV

The Call of Abram

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

²“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

* *Gloria Patri*

Children's Message / Congregation Conversation

* *Meditation Hymn*

“Lord, Speak to Me”

VH #215

Today's Message

* *The Apostle's Creed*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hades; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic/Christian church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

* *The Lord's Prayer*

**Our Father, who 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.**

* *Sung Response*

“Hear Our Prayer, O Lord”

TH # 501

The Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Statement

Offertory (MH)

* Doxology

TH # 551

* Offertory Prayer

O God who calls us to go out into the world with generosity, may these gifts call us from our lives of comfort and towards a faith journey that embraces your love, justice, and compassion for a world in need of your healing. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

* *Closing Hymn*

“Ye Must Be Born Again”

VH #416

* *Benediction*

Friends, go forth with the courage of God to guide you into those places of restlessness and uncertainty.

For we are called to go...

From our places of comfort.

From our certainties and complacency.

From our old life and into the new.

May the call of God not just call us *from* but *toward* a love so compelling that we are willing to trust our whole self into the embrace of the Creator, into the abiding love of Christ, and into the sacred dance of the Holy Spirit.

We go forth in the peace of Christ. Amen!

* *Three-Fold Amen*

TH # 558

* *Postlude/Extinguishing of the Candle*

Called to Go: Service Prayers for the Second Sunday in Lent were written by Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott who serves as the Conference Minister for the Indiana Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ and resides in Indianapolis, Indiana.