

Sunday February 3, 2019 - 10:00 a.m.

\*Please stand if you are able

**Prelude**

**Welcome and February Birthdays**

We Gather Around God's Word

**Bells and Chimes Call To Worship:**

**Introit:** "I Love You Lord" (See PowerPoint)

**\*Prayer of Invocation:** 🙏

**God of the prophets, is it possible that you,  
who spoke to Jeremiah and Jesus, will speak to us?**

**We may not be ready to believe it.**

**We may not be ready to receive you.**

**But we have gathered in your name and we pray:**

**Come, Holy One!**

**Fill us with the story of your people; fill us with your loving Word.**

**Take us as we are, and make us wholly yours.**

***and move us to joyful adoration of your mystery and wonder.***

**In Jesus name we pray. Amen.**

**\*Hymn:** "Break Over Me" Acapella- (See PowerPoint)

**Hymn of Confession:#188** "Give Me a Clean Heart"

**Words of Assurance:**

God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. Rest assured God desires forgiveness and reconciliation so that we may be freed from the burden of sin and raised up into new life by the power of the Spirit. Accept God's forgiveness and be transformed by God's grace.

**Passing God's Peace**

*In the spirit of peace and the hope of unity,  
let us offer each other a sign of Christ's peace!*

**Special Music:** by Janna Brunskill - **Playing Singing Bowls**

We Engage God's Word

**Scripture Readings:**

**Jeremiah 1:4-10**

**Psalms 71:1-6**

**1 Corinthians 13**

## Youth Moment/ The Lord's Prayer

### **A Time of Reflection: "Follow the Way of Love"**

Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*, once said, "Love is holy because it is like grace--the worthiness of its object is never really what matters." ([http://www.ucc.org/worship\\_samuel\\_sermon\\_seeds\\_february\\_3\\_2019](http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_february_3_2019))

When I was in seminary one of my professors shared this about his time serving as an interim minister in one particular Methodist church. He shared with us how at one church where he was appointed as an interim they wouldn't give him a key to the church so he always had to wait for a church member to open the church. In the middle of his sermons if the 87 year old organist didn't agree with what he was saying she piped up behind the organ and said her piece. This the tip of the iceberg and the mistreatment continued on for six months. He then posed the question to our class: "What do you do? What do you do when the beloved 87 year old organist challenges your sermon in the middle of worship? What do you do when the church has so little trust in you they won't give you a key? Church rules say you as a pastor can insist they give you a key. What do you do? Then he went on to say "You love them where they are." I repeat: "You love them where they are"

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 *"Love is patient, love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."*

This professor could have gone to the bishop and insisted that the church give him a key. He could have insisted that the church organist not interrupt his sermons, but he didn't. He continued to allow God to work through him, by sharing the gospel message in love; trusting in the transformative power of the one who created us, while enduring persecution and mistreatment week after week, believing in and drawing hope from the love of God for him and this congregation. Did you hear that, he not only believed God loved him, but that God loved this congregation that treated him so poorly. He saw by faith and not by sight. His love was expressed in concrete action. How often do we recognize the love of God for those who mistreat us?

At the end of six months the church had a potluck following worship. So having been nourished by the word of God and having shared a meal together, while still sitting at the table spirit filled and bellies full he broached the subject of their behavior. Saying "You know, you folks have been kind of owly, what is with that?" They freely admitted that yes they had been kind of owly and then responded by sharing their story of mistreatment by a former clergy and the lack of response and care from the denomination. He listened closely to their story and affirmed their feelings without affirming or condoning their behavior. The next week he was given a key to the church. That church continues to be transformed by the love of God, the God who loves the world so much that he sent his only Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Did you hear that? It says to save the world through him, not just souls, but the world. For this church, relationships were built and restored as they allowed God's unending and enduring love to enter into their lives bringing healing and wholeness into their lives, individually and as the body of Christ. When this church had realized that God had not abandoned them hope was restored and new life was born. Had the pastor insisted on having his own way, though what he preached may have been the same, it most likely would have fallen on deaf ears. By him allowing God to work through him the message got through and they not only were transformed but developed a hope for the future.

Lamentations 3:21-22 states, *"This I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail."* The love spoken of in 1 Cor. 13 is God's love. God's love that never ends is offered to us here and is with us now. It was not my professor who transformed that church, but him willingly being God's servant and allowing the love of God in him and being carried out and through him that brought about this transformation. The thing is, the church did not have to wait for this professor to experience the transforming love of God, it was there all along. In hearing their cry God sent them a more visible and tangible presence of that love.

In our lesson from Jeremiah we learn that God is the one who appointed him to carry out a difficult task to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. What Jeremiah was to proclaim and carry out was not of his own will and desires, but that of God's and God assured Jeremiah that

God would be with him every step of the way. If you notice, all the plucking and pulling, destroying and overthrowing, comes before the building and planting. When you're remodeling a house, what has to happen before you can make the improvements to the home? Sometimes there is only minor tearing down, destruction, and tossing out, while other times there is a major gutting of the entire structure that has to happen before the work of transformation rebuilding can happen. The same is true in our lives, in our church, and in our world.

I once received an email that said *"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning to dance in the rain."* We know that God has given each and every one of us different gifts to use within the body of Christ. Those gifts that God has given us are God's appointment on our lives and the best way to fulfill and carry out that appointment is by embodying the love of Christ. Without love, it does not matter what budgets, buildings, or missional strategies we have. Such things do not give the church the shape that God desires. We may pursue various forms of spirituality, or proper doctrine, or activism in the name of justice. However, in our pursuit of these otherwise fine things, we must not forget that the church is called to be a community that practices love.

We need not wait for the storms of life to pass or to be restored and renewed in spirit. God's love is with us now. We need only to allow God to guide us in the way of love in and through the storms of life. God created us and breathed into us the very breath of life. God gave us the sacraments of baptism and communion as outward and visible signs of God's love for us and covenantal relationship with us. Christ prays for us. Hear Christ's prayer from the Gospel of John 17:20-23. *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be as one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."* What more do we need? Love isn't always easy, but it is what is needed. May God reveal to us that which needs to be torn down, plucked out, destroyed, and tossed out in order to clear the way for the Almighty to build, plant, restore and renew us, and in our daily lives, in this church, in our community, in our nation, and in our world where so much suffering, violence and poverty is still being experienced. May we, like my professor, see with the eyes of faith. May each and every one of us embrace the call that God has set upon our lives and carry that call out embodying the love of God in all we do, learning to dance in both the sun and the rain. May we heed the instructions from the book of Hebrews, "Let us lay aside the weight and sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the perfecter of our faith."

As we turn to Jesus, Let us move forward in love a love that is patient and kind; not envious, boastful, arrogant, or rude. A love that does not insist on its own way; is not irritable or resentful; does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. A love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. A love that never ends. A love that can only happen when we let the love of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer enter into our entire being and work through us.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy, peace, and love as we trust in Emmanuel. Amen

## We Respond to God's Word

**Hymn of Response:** "The Gift of Love" (See PowerPoint)

**Sharing Joys, Concerns, and Prayers for the World**

**Call to Offering/ Offertory**

**\*Epiphany Doxology:**

Praise God the source of life and breath;  
Praise Christ, now born to conquer death;  
Praise Holy Spirit's mystery:  
One God, pure grace, who sets us free. Amen

**\*Prayer of Dedication:** 🗣️ (In Unison)

**God of the prophets, we bless this offering  
as people who have received your gifts of grace and hope.  
We return to you a portion of the abundance you have given to us.  
We dedicate all that we give, to your loving purposes:  
bringing in those who have been cast out;  
standing strong on behalf of those who are weak;  
speaking out with your Word of joy and justice for all people.  
May your loving realm increase!  
In Jesus' name: Amen.**

**Communion Hymn: #342 "Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread"**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion (See PowerPoint)**

Bread in Dish– Gluten Free: Bread on Plate – Regular  
Dark Glass – Grape Juice: Light Glass – Wine

**We Are Sent Into the World**

**Church News**

**\*Sending Hymn:** "Love Canon" (See PowerPoint)

**\* Benediction and Response:**

**GO NOW IN PEACE**

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🗣️ indicates these prayers have been taken from or adapted from a service written by Rev. John A. Nelson, Connecticut Conference.

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