

In a world where Christianity is too often associated with intolerance, exclusion, and hate, the mission of United Church on the Green is to proclaim Christ through faith, hope, and love. We are a community of many races, ethnic backgrounds, religious experiences, ages, sexual orientations, and gender identities. No matter where you are on your journey of faith, you will have a home here at United Church on the Green.

March 8, 2026

10:00AM

Lent 3A

We Gather as Church

*Please stand as you are able

PRELUDE

Hommage á J. S. Bach

Christa Rakich

Variations on *Heinlein*

WORDS OF WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER

One: For Rahab's red cord and for all who risk their lives to give refuge to your people,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For Ruth's loyalty and Esther's courage, and for all who serve you in foreign lands,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For Deborah's leadership and Miriam's dance and for all who break glass ceilings,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For Sarah's faithfulness and Jael's fierceness and for all who take things into their own hands,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For Hagar and all the unnamed women who survived to do your will in the wilderness,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For the Alabaster Jar Woman and for all who flout convention in your name,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For Mary Magdalene's heart and for all who linger at the cross,
All: We thank you, O God.

One: For all the grace-filled women who cross borders and dismantle
fences, who face down soldiers and walk picket lines, who like Mary the
Mother of Jesus carry your love into the world,
All: We thank you, O God.


***HYMN #370**

The Church Is Like a Table
Pamela Ward, *composer*


HOLLY LANE



1. The church is like a ta - ble, a ta - ble that is round.
2. The church is like a ta - ble set in an o - pen house;
3. The church is like a ta - ble, a ta - ble for a feast
4. The church is like a ta - ble, where ev - 'ry head is crowned.



It has no sides or cor - ners, no first or last, no ho - nors;
no pro - to - col for seat - ing, a sym - bol of in - vit - ing,
to cel - e - brate the heal - ing of all ex - clud - ed - feel - ing,
As guests of God cre - a - ted, all are to each re - lat - ed;



here peo - ple are in one - ness and love to - geth - er bound.
of shar - ing, drink - ing, eat - ing; an end to "them and us."
while Christ is serv - ing, kneel - ing, a towel a - round his waist.
the whole world is a - wait - ed to make the cir - cle round.

GATHERING PRAYER (Unison)

Pastor Ray

We give thanks to you, Oh God, for you are good; for your steadfast love endures forever. You have redeemed us from trouble and gathered us in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. When we cry to you in trouble, you bring us out of our distress.

We thank you God for your steadfast love, for your wonderful works to humankind. We lift up your name here in the congregation of the people and praise you in the assembly of the elders. We worship you here, today, together. Amen.

CHILDREN'S GATHERING

All children are invited to come to the front for a brief time of greeting and prayer. Afterward, children are invited to go to the children's room, or children may stay with their parents.

Children's Sermon and Sing-Along

if you promise to be welcoming
then you are welcome here!
if you keep an open heart
an open mind and open ears!
if you know that folks are different
and it's nothing to fear
then I promise you will always be
welcome here!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Abram Guerra

Gracious God, you tell us to love one another—to love others the way we so naturally love ourselves. Yet each of us must admit that we have failed to do so. Jesus taught us to love our neighbors even if they don't look like us, even if they don't think like us, even if they don't love like us, even if they don't pray like us, even if they don't speak like us, even if they don't vote like us. But we have failed to love one another with no exceptions.

Brief period of silence

Forgive us Holy One, and make us again in your image of Love. Blot out our sins, renew our minds, rekindle our hearts, and guide us by Your Holy Spirit into the Love that is your will. Amen.

HYMN RESPONSE

Holy, Holy, Holy

HTL #287

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly. My heart, my heart a - dore you! My
San - to, san - to, san - to. ¡Mi co - ra - zón te a - do - ra! Mi
heart knows how to say to you: you are ho - ly, Lord!
co - ra - zón te sa - be de - cir: ¡San - to e - res Señ - or!

The musical score is written in 4/4 time. The first system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a bass clef staff. The lyrics are placed between the two staves. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, ending with a double bar line and the number 8, indicating the end of the hymn.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

One: Siblings in Christ, God's Spirit did not leave us after that first Pentecost. The Spirit is still with us, empowering us to know mercy and grace, forgiveness and service. In this Spirit, and through Christ, we proclaim the Good News:

All: We are forgiven Alleluia! Amen.

We Listen for God's Word

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:39-45

Reader

³⁹ In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, ⁴⁰ where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ⁴³ And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? ⁴⁴ For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

***HYMN #471**

I Want Jesus To Walk with Me

SOJOURNER

1. I want Je - sus to walk with me; (walk with me)
2. In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
3. When I'm trou - bled, Lord, walk with me;
4. When I'm dy - ing, Lord, walk with me;

I want Je - sus to walk with me; (walk with me)
In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
When I'm trou - bled, Lord, walk with me;
When I'm dy - ing, Lord, walk with me;

all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,
when my heart is al - most break - ing,
when my head is bowed in an - guish,
when I'm on my bed of sor - row,

Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me. (with me)

SERMON

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray, Jr

ANTHEM

Ave Verum Corpus

Stephanie Martin
(b. 1962)

Ave, verum corpus natum
ex Maria Virgine:
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine:
cuius latus perforatum
unda fluxit et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum,
in mortis examine.

Hail the true body, born
of the Virgin Mary:
You who truly suffered and were
sacrificed
on the cross for our sake.
From whose pierced flank
flowed water and blood:
Be a foretaste for us
in the trial of death.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Lord be with you... **And also with you...** Let us pray...

We join our voices to pray, rejoice and celebrate the good things of our life together and those who are celebrating their birthdays including Sarah Guterman + Darnell Ray, Jr.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, we speak words of remembrance and gratitude for courage and persistence.

We pray that we might keep faith with those who struggled for all to see the full humanity of Your beloved children.

Of every hue. Of every race. Of every culture and tongue.

Immigrants. Refugees. Our Queer and trans siblings.

We pray for those who have lost their lives bearing witness to the humanity, dignity, and value of our siblings and kin.

We pray for the unhoused in our own city that they might find shelter and welcome.

We lift special prayers for those suffering famine in our land and across the world.

We pray for our world, suffering the ravages of Climate Change.

Standing expectantly before an uncertain future, we pray for our children, their teachers, school staffs and administrators that they may together learn to dream of a different world.

We pray for those challenged by physical and mental illness and for we who love them.

We pray that wisdom and courage might lead those with plenty, to help make a better world for all.

We pray for our nation as we stumble into yet another ill-conceived war and the lives that will be broken because of it.

We pray that as Your Church we will be a place of refuge that ever lives in the power of Hope.

SILENT PRAYER

PASTORAL PRAYER

We pray with the words you taught us to pray:

Our Father/Mother/God/Creator, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

We invite you to greet one another with signs of peace

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO OFFERING

OFFERTORY

I Lift Up My Eyes

Margaret Burk

I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?
My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heav'n and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved,
and he who watches over you
will not fall asleep.
The Lord himself watches over you;
the Lord is your shade at your right
hand,

so that the sun shall not strike you by
day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve you from evil;
it is he who shall keep you safe.
The Lord shall watch over your going
out
and your coming in,
from this time forth for evermore.

***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.**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

God, thank you, thank you, thank you – for your grace, for this community of faith, for the gifts of our lives. Bless these offerings today that they might be used to further your reign of righteousness here and now. Work through each of us and through the ministries of this congregation that we might glorify you in all we do. Amen.

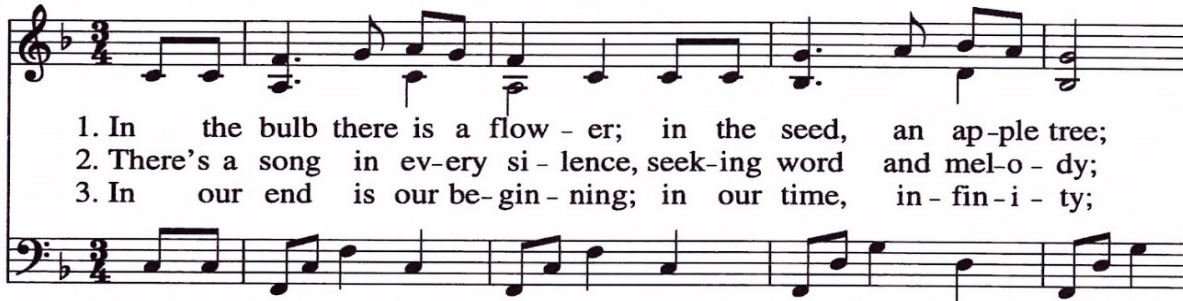
We Are Sent Out

*HYMN #493

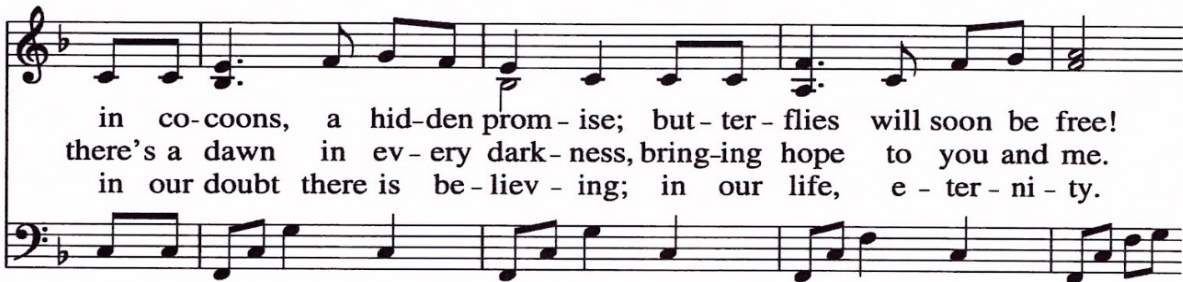
In the Bulb There Is a Flower

PROMISE

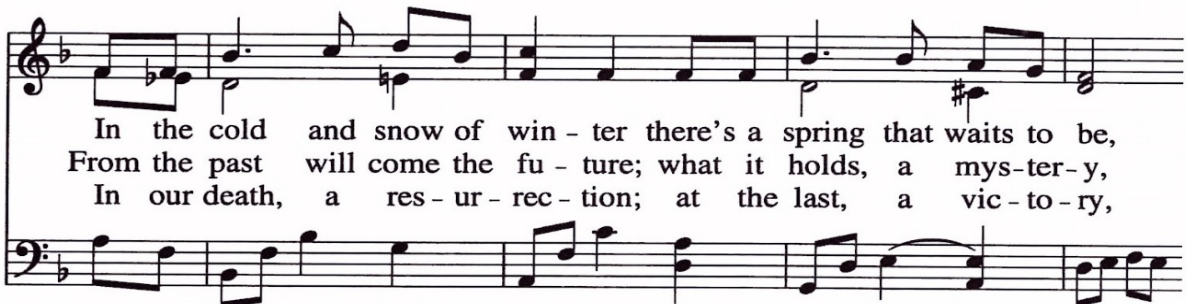
Natalie Sleeth, *composer*



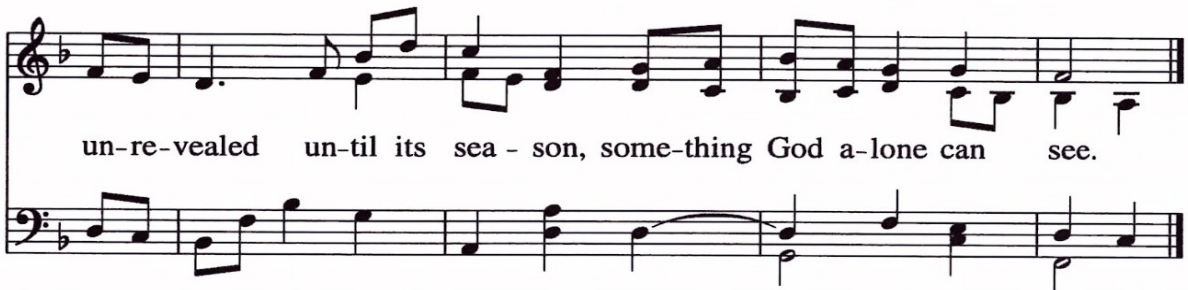
1. In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;
2. There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;
3. In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;



in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise; but - ter - flies will soon be free!
there's a dawn in 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.

COMMISSION AND BLESSING

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,
so that we may seek truth boldly and love deep within our hearts.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation, and war,
so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world,
so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen, Ameen, and Ashe!

POSTLUDE

Search for a New Land

Maggie Johns

Our Worship Has Ended. Let Our Service Begin!

Please join us at Coffee Hour after Worship

<https://unitednewhaven.org/this-weeks-worship>

Scan the QR Code to Sign Up for our Weekly Newsletter



THIS WEEK'S WORSHIP LEADERS

Senior Pastor

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray, Jr.

Director of Music

Caesar Storlazzi

UCG Choir: Cher Balkcom, Judith Carlson, Delaney Fox, Grecia Hernandez Hontz, Thomas Hernandez Hontz, Tess Klibanoff, Christopher Leimgruber, Julia Blue Raspe, Daniel Rausch, Connor Reese, and Mary Scanlon

Digital Deacons

Worship & Music Ministry Team

Coffee Hour Coordinator

Dale Richards

Head Sexton

William Henton

THIS WEEK AT UNITED CHURCH

Mar 8th: 10:00AM Sunday Worship - Meeting House and Online

Mar 10th: 12Noon Staff Meeting – Online

Mar 12th: 6:00PM Bible Study – Online

For Our Full Calendar, go to: www.calendarwiz.com/unitednewhaven

CHURCH NOTES

Musical Permissions

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MEETING HOUSE WIFI INFORMATION

WiFi Network: UCG Meetinghouse

WiFi Password: 2037874195

INCLEMENT WEATHER PROTOCOL

If we close during inclement weather, and we have online church services, the Pastor will notify members and friends, via the eBlast, TextInChurch and our Social Media Platforms.

EASTER FLORAL DISPLAY DEDICATIONS

Due Date: Monday March 30th

Free Will Offering

The Meeting House will be decorated with a Floral Display on Easter. You can dedicate a plant to someone who has passed away ("In Memory of"), or someone who is still with us ("In Honor of"). We will add your dedication to the Easter Sunday Bulletin. If you would like to dedicate a plant to a loved one, send your Dedication Language to: office@unitednewhaven.org.

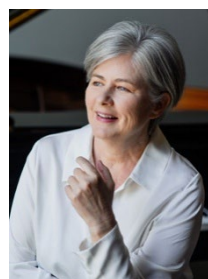
There is a Free Will Offering for our Easter Floral Display, this year. If you would like to contribute to our Floral fund, please use a donation envelope or donate on our website: unitednewhaven.org/donate

Today's Music

Sunday, March 8, 2026 has been designated as *Woman Composer Sunday*, and in honor of this celebration, we are featuring the music of women composers in today's service. The Prelude and Postlude, the Anthem and Offertory Anthem, as well as the Opening and Closing hymns are all by women composers.



Organist Christa Rakich has performed widely throughout North America, Europe, and Japan. She is Visiting Professor of Organ at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio through the academic year 2019-2020. Near her home in Connecticut, she maintains two Artist-in-Residencies: St. John's Episcopal Church in West Hartford and the Congregational Church of Somers. Past Artist-in-Residencies have included the University of Pennsylvania and First Lutheran Church in Boston. As a Fulbright Scholar, Christa Rakich studied with renowned Bach interpreter Anton Heiller at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, Austria. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Organ and German from Oberlin College (Phi Beta Kappa). After receiving her Master's degree with honors from New England Conservatory, she joined the faculty there, teaching for many years, and serving ultimately as department co-chair. She has also served on the faculties of Westminster Choir College, Brandeis University, and the University of Connecticut, and as Assistant University Organist at Harvard.



Canadian Composer Stephanie Martin is Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar of music at York University's School of the Arts, Media, Performance, and Design. For the 2025 -26 season she is composer-in-residence for the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. She directs Schola Magdalena, a women's ensemble, is conductor emeritus of Pax Christi Chorale, and past director of music at the historic church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Toronto. An accomplished composer of works for both voices and instruments, Martin's awards include the York University AMPD research award (2019), the Exultate Chamber Singers' competition (2009), and the Association of Anglican Musicians competition (2010). She became an associate of the Canadian Music Centre in 2011, and was composer in residence for the Barrie Music Festival (2012). She accompanied *Mosaic* choir as resident composer on their tour to Israel (2019).



A native of Lawrence, Kansas, **Margaret Burk** is currently Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis., where she oversees the choral area, teaches coursework in music education, choral literature, and conducting, and directs the award-winning Carthage Choir. In demand as a clinician, she recently conducted the Virginia All-State Treble Choir and has appeared as a faculty member at the Montreat Conference on Music and Worship (Montreat, NC) and the Royal School of church Music King's college Course (Wilkes-Barre, PA).

Burk is an active composer and professional chorister. Her music is published by Oxford University Press, Hal Leonard, and Selah Music Publishing, and has been heard on the BBC Radio 3 as well as at venues such as the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, St. Mark's Church in Philadelphia, PA, and St. Michael and All Angels in Dallas, TX.



Search for a New Land by **Maggie Johns** won the Young Organist Prize in the AGO 2026 Woman Composer Sunday Organ Composition Competition and is featured as today's Postlude.

Johns began playing the piano at the age of 7, learning by ear for a year before beginning lessons. At 17, she was admitted to the University of Maryland, where she earned her Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance with Dr. Larissa Dedova and graduated *summa cum laude*.

At the Cleveland Institute of Music, Johns was awarded her Master of Music degree in Piano Performance with a concentration in Piano Pedagogy; she also received the Gilbert M. Brooks Dean's Award as well as the William Kurzban Prize in Piano.

Johns is pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the guidance of Kathryn Brown. The composer's ties to Cleveland go beyond her schooling, however; she is the artist-in-residence at Judson Park, delivering curated recitals to residents there. She is also a piano instructor at the Aurora School of Music and serves as Co-Chair of Student Activities for the Northeast Ohio Music Teachers Association.

At United Church on the Green, we seek to Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God, following the footsteps of Jesus. We are also a Progressive Protestant Christian Church, a member of the Nationwide United Church of Christ (UCC).

We have a long history.

- Established 1742. Meetinghouse was built in 1815.
- The Amistad Incident? Abolition of slavery? The 1970 Black Panther trials? Divestment in South Africa? United was there.

We believe God is still speaking to the world today... and we're trying to listen.

- Not a "The Bible says it. I believe it. That settles it." kind of church. Questions encouraged. (Actually, they're necessary.)
- "Open and Affirming" of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people since 1989.

We are working with God to build a better future.

- Not interested in "saving souls" or "converting the heathen." God's love is for all.
- Trying to "connect the dots" to grow peace, justice, and compassion in the world.

Staff Contacts

Rev. Dr. Stephen G. Ray Jr., *senior pastor*

Caesar Storlazzi, *director of music*

Maxim Schmidt, *digital media administrator*

Nicole René Atchison, *church administrator*

Nancy Lupi, *financial secretary*

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Rev. Louise B. Higginbotham, *minister emerita*

Rev. Dr. Bonnie Scott, *minister emerita*

United Church on the Green, UCC

Meeting House, *corner of Temple & Elm*

Parish House office, *corner of Temple & Wall*

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