



LENT
“BORN FROM ABOVE”

March 1, 2026
<https://zoom.us/j/716026467>
Call in 669-900-9128

PASTOR	Rev Laurie Manning
LITURGIST	Rod Repke
MUSIC DIRECTOR	Edward Nunoo
ACCOMPANIST	Rob Finucane
<u>ZOOM HOST</u>	Abby Givler
<u>HOSPITALITY</u>	Nancy Taylor
<u>USHERS</u>	Sheila Helms
<u>GREETER</u>	Everyone!
<u>CHILDCARE</u>	Catherine Kessler

Land Acknowledgement: We gather today on the unceded homelands of the Ohlone and the Chochoenyospeaking Ohlone peoples. Let us strive to honor all indigenous peoples by joining their efforts to pursue justice and care for this land.

RINGING OF THE BELL: Rod Repke

PRELUDE: “All Beautiful the March of Days” - Frances Wile
Edward Nunoo, bass & Rob Finucane, piano

WELCOME & PASSING THE PEACE

[Visitor form](#), [Prayer requests](#), [Comments](#)

If you are visiting this morning, we are so glad you are here! We hope you'll join us for friendship time after worship. Tell us about yourself or sign up for our mailing list by filling out a Virtual Connect Card.

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: Holy One, you call us to step out from what is familiar.

People: You invite us into journeys we cannot yet see.

Leader: You promise blessing, not just for us, but for all creation.

People: We come, ready to listen, to learn, and to be transformed.

Leader: Spirit of Love, meet us here in our questions and our doubts.

People: Birth us again into courage, compassion, and wonder. Amen.

OPENING HYMN “We Sing To You, O God”
(NCH #9, verses 1 & 4)

PRAYER OF APPROACH (Unison):

Spirit of Life, woven through all creation—you meet us in our questions, our fears, our desire for control. Call us, like Abram and Sarai, to trust your promise enough to move, to loosen our grip on certainty, and to become a blessing for others.

Meet us, like Nicodemus, in the night places of our hearts, and whisper again that another kind of life is possible—

a life born from your Spirit, rooted in love not condemnation, in justice not domination.

In this season that holds Black History Month and Women’s History Month, attune us to the wisdom of Black women and

womanist theologians, who have refused to live on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls, and who help midwife new worlds of freedom and dignity.

We are beloved. Help us live like we believe it. Amen.

MUSIC FOR PREPARATION:

“Guide My Feet” (NCH #497)

Edward Nunoo, bass & Rob Finucane, piano

FIRST READING: *The Call of Abram*

Genesis 12:1–4a (NIV)

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

“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.

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

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

SILENCE (60 seconds)

MUSICAL RESPONSE:

“Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness” - Jim Manley

Edward Nunoo, bass & Rob Finucane, piano

SECOND READING: John 3:1–17 (NIV)

1 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.

RESPONSE:

Leader: Jesus invited Nicodemus into a new way of seeing.

People: We open ourselves to new birth.

Leader: Not a private escape, but a love big enough for the whole world.

People: We practice a love that frees, not condemns.

Leader: The Spirit moves where it will, crossing boundaries and breaking open old certainties.

People: This is the way that leads to life.

ANTHEM:

“God So Loved the World” - John Stainer, arr. Edward Nunoo

Skyline Choir; Edward Nunoo, conductor; Rob Finucane, Piano

A WORD FROM HOWARD THURMAN:

“There is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.”

During Black History Month and Women’s History Month, we remember the Black women, womanist theologians, and freedom-fighters who have refused to live on “the ends of strings” – who have listened for the sound of the genuine in their own bodies and histories, and who have helped midwife a new world for all of us.

SERMON: “BORN FROM ABOVE”

SERMON RESPONSE:
(SILENCE 60 seconds)

PRAYERS AND GRATITUDES OF THE ALL:
[\(Tree of Life\)](#)

THE LORD'S PRAYER *All:* Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen

COMMUNION:

All are welcome to participate

Pastor Laurie Manning, Usher Sheila Helms

COMMUNION HYMN:

“What Is This Place?” (Skyline Songbook #25)

Edward Nunoo, bass & Rob Finucane, piano

OFFERTORY:

“In The Bulb There Is a Flower” - Natalie Sleeth

Edward Nunoo, bass & Rob Finucane, piano

Friends may make credit card contributions through Stripe at skylineucc.org/give (preferred) or at paypal.me/skylinechurch or skyline.churchtrac.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: skylineucc.org/news

MOMENT for MISSION: UCC EastBay
Climate Hope Affiliate

CLOSING HYMN:

“You Are Mine” (Skyline Songbook #26)
(verses 1 and 4)

BENEDICTION:

POSTLUDE: “You Are Mine” (Improv)
Rob Finucane, piano

Upcoming Events – Ways to Stay Connected

Weekly Gatherings

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/716026467>

- Tuesdays @ 10:30 AM – Bible Study (Leader: Pastor Laurie)
<https://skylineucc.org/online-bible-study/>
- Wednesdays @ 7 pm Howard Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited (Leader Pastor Laurie)
<https://skylineucc.org/23555-2/>
- Fridays @ 1:00 PM – Prayer and Care Group (Leader: Pastor Laurie)

In-Person:

- Sundays @ 8:45 AM – Choir Practice – All are welcome!

Regular Meetings

- Twice monthly @ 1:00 PM – Staff Meeting (Next: March 6, 2026)
- Third Thursdays @ 6:00 PM – Council Meeting on Zoom

Special Events – Mark Your Calendars

Date	Event	Location
Wednesdays, Feb 25 - March 18	Book Study: <i>Jesus and the Disinherited -Howard Thurman</i>	7-8 pm - Zoom
2 nd Fridays, Next: March 13 6pm	Film Fridays: Movie & Potluck <u>Next movie selection "The Testament of Ann Lee"</u> In honor of Women's History Month, we'll use the film as a springboard for conversation about women's spiritual authority, radical Christian community, and how apocalyptic hope can both sustain resistance and slip into unhealthy control.	Skyline Friendship Room
Sun, March 15,	One Great Hour of Sharing One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. It connects you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. Your contributions help meet urgent needs while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.	Donations Requested
Sun, March 22, 4-6 pm	Resonance & Renewal: A Spring Equinox Mini Retreat	Skyline Sanctuary & Labyrinth

	Pastor Laurie and Diana Bitting https://www.catbirdclub.com	
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NEW EVENTS: “What makes you come alive?”

“Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” — Howard Thurman

Sermon Series: Becoming Human (Sundays, Feb 8 through Easter April 5) Influenced by the wisdom of **Howard Thurman**, this series explores what it means to live a grounded life in anxious times. We’ll look at attention, limits, and resilience through the lens of Gospel stories, psychology, and neuroscience. These aren't sermons about "believing harder"—they are about learning how to live more honestly and gently in the world.

Lenten Practice Group: *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Wednesdays, starting Feb 25, 7 pm on zoom) In a time of deep division, Howard Thurman’s classic remains a vital roadmap for spiritual and social survival. We will explore how Thurman’s vision of dignity, resistance, and love helps us navigate the modern world with our humanity intact.

Resonance & Renewal: A Spring Equinox Mini Retreat - Sunday, March 22, 4-6 pm
 Blending breathwork, trauma-informed yoga, sound healing, and guided rest. Drawing on both modern neuroscience and ancient contemplative practice, this afternoon is designed to help you release what you’ve been carrying and arrive in something quieter.

You will move through:

- Breathwork that measurable lowers cortisol and activates your body’s rest response.
- Vagus nerve toning - your body’s built-in stress-to-calm pathway
- Trauma-informed yoga flow to release tension held in muscles and connective tissue.
- A guided visualization for letting go and clarifying what’s next
- Vocal toning and a closing practice to integrate and seal.

A THANK YOU TO OUR MARCH VOLUNTEERS!

Thank you for your faithful service that brings our Sunday gatherings to life. Your generosity creates the space where we truly meet one another. All, please review the schedule below and consider where **your** gifts may enhance our church’s services. Email office@skylineucc.org [Volunteer Schedule 2025-2026](#)

DATE	Liturgist	Zoom Host	GREETER*	USHER **	Hospitality (food & drink)	Guest preachers
3/1/2026	Rod Repke	Abby Givler	Everyone!	Sheila Helms	Nancy Taylor	
3/8/2026	Jim Schubert	Abby Givler	Jim Schubert	Sheila Helms	Jim Schubert	
3/15/2026	Mona Sillers	Lani	Carolyn Noble	Sheila Helms	Carolyn Noble	
3/22/2026	Carolyn Noble	Abby Givler	OPEN	Sheila Helm	OPEN	

3/29/2026	OPEN	Abby Givler	OPEN	Sheila Helms	OPEN	
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*Greeter: Welcome visitors; collect contact information; invite to fellowship after service; introduce to others.

**Usher: Distribute Bulletins and Hymnals/Music Booklets per the day's Bulletin; collect offerings; help with communion.

Skyline's Future in Focus- Worship - Please Share Your Thoughts:

Remove this page and place in offering plate or give to Pastor Laurie:

At our visioning retreat, we identified four areas of focus for Skyline's future:

1. Inspired by the Way of Jesus: Deepening our relationship with God.
2. God's Prophetic Inclusion: Creating welcoming spaces and justice-centered connections.
3. Invitation to Deeper Faith: Providing welcome and respite as a spiritual sanctuary.
4. Stewardship of God's Gifts: Committing to green ecology and environmental mission.

I need to know how to make these priorities real—and what to stop doing so we have room to do them well. This takes 2-3 minutes. Be honest. Your answers help me lead us toward the sanctuary we are trying to create.

1. SUNDAY WORSHIP: The Core Experience

Worship is the one place where all four areas of focus meet. Based on our retreat priorities, how should Sunday morning evolve?

Which 2 changes would make Sunday worship more meaningful for you?

More Respite: Integrated silence and contemplative space (Retreat Priority: 21 votes ★)

More Stewardship: Nature-based elements or creation-centered theology (15 votes ★)

More Inclusion: Interactive/participatory elements and post-worship discussion (9 votes)

More Inspiration: More music and sung worship (8 votes)

Alternative Formats: Different times or outdoor settings.

3. THE STRATEGIC PRUNE IN WORSHIP:

What could Skyline stop doing (or do less of) to create breathing room for our four priorities?

What is the #1 barrier getting in the way of your participation? (Name optional)

A NOTE ON JOHN'S GOSPEL AND ANTISEMITISM

John's gospel contains language that has caused profound harm. The phrase *hoi loudaioi* — translated "the Jews" — appears over seventy times in John, often as a collective antagonist. For centuries this language was used to portray Jewish people as enemies of God and of Christ. Massacres against Jewish communities happened at Easter, fueled by Passion narratives preached without care. This history is not abstract. It is lethal, and it is part of the tradition we have inherited.

What the scholarship tells us: John was almost certainly written by Jewish Christians in conflict with other Jewish leaders. The word *aposynagogos* — being expelled from the synagogue — appears three times in John and nowhere else in the New Testament. John's community had been cast out of their Jewish home, and the hostility encoded in this gospel reflects that painful rupture — a family argument, not a Christian attack from outside. When John writes "the Jews," he almost certainly means the Jerusalem temple leadership specifically, not Jewish people as a people. Jesus, Nicodemus, John himself — all Jewish.

Nicodemus himself runs against an anti-Jewish reading of this gospel. He is one of John's most sympathetically drawn figures — a man who comes at night with real questions, who speaks up for due process in chapter 7 ("does our law condemn a man without first hearing him?"), and who finally steps into daylight with an extravagant quantity of myrrh and aloes to tend the body of Jesus after the crucifixion. John treats him not as an enemy but as someone in a slow, costly movement toward the light. The arc of his story runs counter to condemnation.

And there is this: the passage we read today ends with verse 17 — "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." The gospel that has been most misused to justify condemnation ends its most famous passage with a categorical refusal to condemn.

For further reading: Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (2018); Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew* (2006); Raymond Brown, *The Gospel of John* (Anchor Bible Commentary).