

Stop.
Unclench your jaw.
Soften your brow.
Relax your shoulders.
Breathe.



PARKWAY

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ALL ACCEPTED, NO EXCEPTIONS



www.parkwayucc.org

February 18, 2026

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Limitless Love | Courageous Action | Spirited Inquiry

Purpose Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community embracing: spiritual nourishment, open-minded inquiry, courageous action, and interfaith partnerships to fulfill God’s calling to create a just world for all.

Congregational Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ, with God’s grace, seeks to be a congregation that includes all persons, regardless of race, ethnic, or socio—economic background while respecting differences of gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We aspire to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our open and affirming congregation.

PARKWAY UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

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John Nourse, *Pastor Emeritus*

Welcome to Parkway

Thank you for joining us this evening! If you are with us virtually, please let us know you are here by commenting in the chat or sending an email.

Welcome Children We invite children to full participation in worship. We also have activity bags for young children to use while they are here.

Bell Rung During Lord's Prayer A tradition begun when farmers working in surrounding fields would stop their work and join in prayer.

Worship Serving Today

Scripture Reader is Gabriel Requadt.

If you would like to volunteer for any Sunday serving opportunities or join the corresponding group, please scan the QR code and click on the **Serving Opportunities Calendar**. Thanks!



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Mental Health Support

988 (new nationwide 3-digit number similar to 911... call or text)
24/7 Crisis Hotline 800-273-8255 (TALK) | 800-SUICIDE: 800-784-2433
24/7 Missouri Department of Mental Health 800-811-4760
Text 741741 and someone will text right back...www.crisistextline.org
Behavioral Health Network of Greater St Louis 314-449-6713
The numbers below are called Warmlines (not Hotlines).
They are peer run by people with lived experience.
Not all of them are 24/7/365
Teen Warm Line: 1 800-248-8336
Black Warm Line: 1-800-604-5841 (They are divested from the police)
Trans Warm Line: 1-877-565-8860
Project Return Warm Line: 1-800-448-9777 (run away)
Learn more about warm lines: <https://warmline.org/warmdir.html>

Birthdays

2/22 Charlotte Smith
2/24 Mia Schulenburg
2/24 Rose Mary
2/25 Karla Beck
2/25 Laura Schowalter

2/25 Wyatt Tallyn
2/27 Paul Roesler
2/27 Cindy Nouri
2/28 Ralph Hoffman
2/28 Alek Waddell

Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 | 7:00pm | Sanctuary & YouTube Live

In the middle of a week, we pause to observe Ash Wednesday together - individually and as a faith community. We remember that God made us from fragile, blessed dust and breathes through us the breath of life and love. From dust we are created and to God's good dust we shall return. With dust and oil and glitter tonight - we claim the mark of God's cherished, flawed and blessed creature. *We are loved with a forever love.*

Today we begin our 40-day Lenten journey to discover who we are created to be as God's beloved - and how we are to approach and treat one another as also beloved.

In daily practices of prayer, study, self-reflection and service we will be very intentional on this Lenten journey. We follow Jesus - God's Beloved Child, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in whom we see God's image most clearly. So come, let us pray for strength and imagination to follow Jesus wherever he will lead us this Lent. We model ourselves after him and long to be a more faithful, creative and effective expression of him.

Our theme this year is: *Questions Shape Us*

As we travel this Lenten journey alone and together, we will ponder some of the questions that Jesus asked and the questions people asked him... as well as the questions we ask ourselves and one another.

We welcome the Spirit to lead us, guide us and light the way so that we can more intentionally communicate the words and ways of Jesus to others as we understand them.

Prelude Improvisation on *Promise of a Lifetime* (Piano) Kutless

Meditation

It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question. ~Eugene Ionesco

Greeting

Welcome Song *Lead Me, Guide Me*

Lead me, guide me, a - long the way,
for if you lead me, I can - not stray.
Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

The musical score is written on four staves in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below the notes. There are triplets in the second and third staves.

Passing the Peace of Christ

“May the peace of Christ be with you.”

(We are intentional about bringing more peace into the world.)

Lighting of the Candles & Ringing of the Bell

Hebrew Scripture Lesson Joel 2, selected verses

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near — a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness spread upon the mountains a great and powerful army comes; their like has never been from of old, nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"

Centering Please take a breath between each line.

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know that I

Be still and know that

Be still and know

Be still and

Be still

Be

Amen.

Lenten Candles Questions Shape Us... *When did we see you?*

We light seven candles tonight as we embark on this Lenten journey. We want the light of the Holy to illumine our path as we seek to be the words and ways of Jesus. We commit to being more infused by the Spirit as we travel. Even as we know this is good and important work, we recognize that it isn't easy - and we will come upon the shadow side of humanity and some of our own unique darkness.

We extinguish one candle each time we gather for worship this season, acknowledging that this can be tough and exhausting work. As we approach the desertion and depletion of Good Friday, we also prepare ourselves for the dawn and love of Easter morning... the light that never goes out.

Prayer at the Candles

Holy One, as we make this Lenten journey alone and together, we bring the questions that shape us, including: What are my limits? How can we be born anew? Where do we find living water? Who is to blame? Can these bones carry us? What do we believe? Who is this Jesus washing our feet? Why are we forsaken? Whom are we looking for? Who will roll the stone away? You meet us not with easy answers but with invitation - to new awareness that adds momentum to love, to heightened senses and unsealed wells, to dry bones moistened, to burdens seen through compassion, to stones

rolled away in hope. In this season of deconstruction and rebuilding, letting go and beginning again - lead us, guide us. Lift our eyes to the hills, steady our steps in the valley, and make us brave enough to ask, humble enough to listen, and bold enough to follow. Form us into people oriented to justice, thirsting for mercy, alive in resurrection. Amen.

***Response** *Were You There When They Questioned?*

Were you there when they questioned Jesus Christ?
Were you there when he asked them questions too?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to wonder, ponder, discern.
Be with us as we question and respond.

Unison Invitation to Confession Psalm 51, selected verses
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my
transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from
my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever
before me.

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me
wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall
be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness. Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right
spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take
your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a
willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and
sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt
offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken
and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Silent Prayers

We suggest more centering and cleansing breaths.

Assurance of Forgiveness based on Romans 8

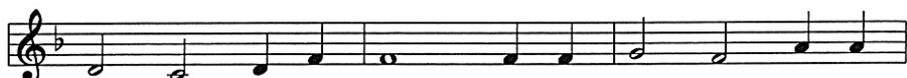
We have this assurance that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Hymn *Sunday's Palms are Wednesday's Ashes*

Our ashes are made from the palms we waved last year during Holy Week.



1. *Sun-day's palms are Wednes-day's ash - es as an -
2. We have failed to love our neigh - bors, their of -
3. We are hast - y to judge oth - ers, blind to



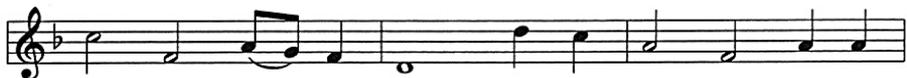
oth - er Lent be - gins; thus we kneel be - fore our
fenc - es to for - give, have not lis - tened to their
proof of hu - man need; and our lack of un - der -



Mak - er in con - tri - tion for our
trou - bles, nor have cared just how they
stand - ing dem - on - strates our in - ner



sins. We have marred bap - tis - mal pledg - es, in re -
live, we are jeal - ous, proud, im - pa - tient, lov - ing
greed; we have wast - ed earth's re - sourc - es; want and



bel - lion gone a - stray; now, re - turn - ing, seek for -
o - ver - much our things; may the yield - ing of our
suf - fering we've ig - nored; come and cleanse us, then re -



give - ness; grant us par - don, God, this day!
fail - ings be our Len - ten of - fer - ings.
store us; make new hearts with - in us, Lord!

Children's Message

Children will remain in Worship this evening. The couches, open area and speakers from the sanctuary make the Gathering Space a good option. Please feel free to use that space if your child needs a change of environment for a few minutes or longer. All are welcome.

Blessing the Children *Jesus Loves Me*

**Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.**

Imposition of Ashes

*From dust we are created and to God's good dust we shall return.
With dust and oil and glitter tonight - we claim the mark of God's
cherished, flawed, blessed and beloved creature.
We are loved with a forever love.*

Response *Spirit of the Living God*

**Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.**

Mission Moment 2nd Mile Lent/Easter

Heifer Int'l | Lydia's House | Unleashing Potential | Bread for the World

Offering Our Gifts to God

Offertory *Evening in Transylvania* by Bela Bartok

***Response** *The Servant Song* | v 2 and 4



- 1 & 6 Won't you let me be your ser - vant, let me be as Christ to you?
- 2 We are pil - grims on a jour - ney, we are trav - elers on the road;
- 3 I will hold the Christ - light for you in the shad - ow of your fear;
- 4 I will weep when you are weep - ing; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
- 5 When we sing to God in heav - en we shall find such har - mo - ny,



Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my ser - vant, too.
We are here to help each oth - er go the mile and bear the load.
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.
I will share your joy and sor - row till we've seen this jour - ney through.
Born of all we've known to - geth - er of Christ's love and ag - o - ny.

***Prayer of Dedication**

Holy One, you have entrusted us with gifts that were never meant to stop with us. As we offer these resources today, we remember the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, those without shelter, those who are sick, those pushed to the margins or locked behind walls - and we remember that you mingle with us in them. Bless what we give, and bless who we are becoming. Stretch these offerings beyond our imagination - into meals shared, dignity restored, systems challenged, and compassion made real. Make us brave enough to see Christ not only in sacred spaces, but in every neighbor whose need calls to us. May our giving be more than charity - may it be participation in your justice, your mercy, and your beloved community. With grateful hearts and willing hands, we pray. Amen.

Gospel Lesson Matthew 25:31-45 | Common English Bible

“Now when the Human One comes in his majesty and all his angels are with him, he will sit on his majestic throne. All the nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them from each other, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right side. But the goats he will put on his left.

“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who will receive good things. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you before the world began. I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me.’

“Then those who are righteous will reply to him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and welcome you, or naked and give you clothes to wear? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

“Then the king will reply to them, ‘I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Get away from me, you who will receive terrible things. Go into the unending fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. I was hungry and you didn’t give me food to eat. I was thirsty and you didn’t give me anything to drink. I was a stranger and you didn’t welcome me. I was naked and you didn’t give me clothes to wear. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

“Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn’t do anything to help you?’ Then he will answer, ‘I assure you that when you haven’t done it for one of the least of these, you haven’t done it for me.’”

Reflection

Invitation to the Communion Table

We invite *all* to this **open table**. All accepted - no exceptions - as we commit ourselves to limitless love, courageous action and spirited inquiry.

Call to Prayer *Come and Find the Quiet Center*

Unison



1. Come and find the qui - et cen - ter in the crowd-ed life we
2. Si - lence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the
3. In the Spir - it let us trav - el, o - pen to each oth-er's



lead, find the room for hope to en - ter, find the
pace, God it is who speaks and names us, knows our
pain, let our loves and fears un - rav - el, cel - e -



frame where we are freed: clear the cha - os and the
be - ing, touch - es base, mak - ing space with - in our
brate the space we gain: there's a place for deep - est



clut - ter, clear our eyes, that we can see all the
think - ing, lift - ing shades to show the sun, rais - ing
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!

Pastoral Prayer

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] **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.**

***Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine**

Please come forward in the center aisle to receive the bread and wine. All are welcome! Gluten-free wafers are on the communion table. Grape juice is in the outer ring; wine is in the center circles. Please return by the side aisles.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Holy Love, we thank you for this meal - for bread that nourishes, for cup that unites, for grace that welcomes all. As we leave this table, help us recognize you in our neighbors - in those who hunger, thirst, struggle, or feel unseen. May what we have received become compassion in us, moving us to acts of justice, mercy, and love. Grateful and strengthened, we go into the world with our questions and convictions - spending this Lent modeling ourselves after Jesus. Amen.

*Closing Song *Called As Partners in Christ's Service*



1. Called as part-ners in Christ's ser-vice, Called to min-is-tries of grace,
2. Christ's ex-am-ple, Christ's in-spir-ing, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
3. Thus new pat-terns for Christ's mis-sion, In a small or glob-al sense,
4. So God grant us for to-mor-row Ways to or-der hu-man life



We re-pond with deep com-mit-ment Fresh new lines of faith to trace.
Let us fol-low, nev-er fal-tering, Rec-on-cil-ing folk on earth.
Help us bear each oth-er's bur-dens, Break-ing down each wall or fence.
That sur-round each per-son's sor-row With a calm that con-quers strife.



May we learn the art of shar-ing, Side by side and friend with friend,
Men and wom-en, rich-er, poor-er, All God's peo-ple, young and old,
Words of com-fort, words of vi-sion, Words of chal-lenge, said with care,
Make us part-ners in our liv-ing, Our com-pas-sion to in-crease,



E - qual part - ners in our car - ing To ful - fill God's cho - sen end.
Blend - ing hu - man skills to - geth - er Gra - cious gifts from God un - fold.
Bring new power and strength for ac - tion, Make us col - leagues, free and fair.
Mes - sen - gers of faith, thus giv - ing Hope and con - fi - dence and peace.

*Benediction

*Postlude

Prayer List

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Celebrations

Black History Month.

Carole Barner and **St Peter's UCC**, New Haven MO - shared ministry

Concerns

Pat Owens - inpatient rehab; plans to be home on birthday 02-18!

Roger and family - Pleis-Eiffert nephew/cousin who died in his sleep.

Randy Cosby - healing as multiple myeloma has returned (Reinhardt).

Marilyn Zucker – healing after a fall and hip surgery (Litzinger).

Sera, Wyatt Watkins & family as she is deployed until end of 2026.

The grief and groaning of Minneapolis and the nation over ICE.

Ongoing chaos/grief in the Middle East - including Iran.

The continuing war with Ukraine and Russia.

Our St Louis neighbors finding their way after tornado in May.

Continuing

Family and friends of Bill Klein - as they grieve/give thanks for him.

Alex Wiseman - living with autoimmune challenges; new doctor appts.

Diane Doty - hospice care after cancer diagnosis (Grant's mom).

Carole Gwyn - ongoing health issues (David's mother).

Ed Calcaterra - optimistic as immune therapy commences (Litzinger).

Jeff Wentworth - nearing the end of his life; hospice care (Grove).

Senobia and Joe Martin - grieving their daughter; Joe is ill (Grove).

Derek - end stage alcoholism; grace for his father David (Akers).

Rebecca - continued healing after brain surgery (Bowermaster).

Phil and Amy and daughter B - as his terminal illness progresses.

Lori Connors - healing and strengthening.

Karla Beck - as her family seeks peace and her brother receives care.

Tina - complications of Legionaries' disease (Jones-Goldstein).

Judy Brueggemann - continuing health challenges (Brad's mother).

Mark McKenzie - for healing, clarity, refreshment (Tom's brother).

Emi - 5 year-old with Children's Hospital for chemo (McConnell).

Kathy - diagnosed with lymphoma; healing after surgery (Akers).

Ron Mudica - receiving hospice care; stage 4 cancer (Akers).

Pam and David - divorced after 55 years of marriage (Akers).

Kenton & Teal Blacksten - K's many health challenges due to diabetes

John Ruiz's oldest brother and wife - healing in Cape Girardeau.

John & Nancy Tallyn - his heart condition; her recurring leukemia.

Renee Pellegrino & family - as she deals with multiple health issues.

Danny Venverlo - awaiting a kidney transplant (McDougall).

Craig Hoffman - career Navy officer receiving hospice care (Svenson).

Haack's doctor and his wife Christine - her ongoing health crisis.

Rebecca Ray - that her book on suicide prevention will be published.

Bill & Nancy Darland - his ongoing health issues.

Gail, Bill and Christopher Haack - chronic health challenges.

Home-Centered/Care Facility/Rehab Center

Lewis Junior Burcham - *The Glenwood*; 1635 N. Baltimore Ave #25; Mt. Zion, IL 62549; 217-864-1757 [birthday: January 15]

John Nourse *The Village at Cape Albeon*; 3300 Lake Bend Dr, #166; Valley Park, MO 63088 [birthdate: October 26]

Pat Owens - *Mason Pointe* - 13190 South Outer Forty Rd, #2303; Town and Country, MO 63017; 314-323-7194 [birthdate: February 18]

Ruth Peace - 10379-D Forest Brooke Ln; StL MO 63146; 314-983-025 meadletter222@gmail.com [birthdate: August 8]

Naomi Runtz - 272 N Lindbergh Blvd; StL MO 63141; 314-993-0469 naomiruntz@sbcglobal.net [birthdate: August 30]

Gladys Sims - *Friendship Village* - 15200 Village View Dr, #2418; Chesterfield, MO 63017; 636-898-8873 [birthdate: July 4]

Ellie Svenson - *Mason Pointe* - 13190 South Outer Forty Rd, #2213; Town and Country, MO 63017; 314-323-7194 [birthdate: June 19]

Judy Waddell - 13510 Weston Park Dr; STL, MO 63131; 314-369-4885 [birthdate: August 13]

Other

Pres Trump, VP Vance, Congress, all local, national, world leaders.

Our trans siblings as they deal with harmful state/federal policy plans.

All who depend on USAID programs that have been eliminated.

The “me too” Movement - shining a light on sexual abuse.

All people who live with mental illness & those dealing with meds.

Caregivers of all shapes and sizes.

PUCC Family struggling with employment; healthcare costs and limits.

Our Missouri Mid-South Conference and St Louis Assn UCC

Gun violence and other violence across the US and other lands.

Conversations about the Death Penalty in the United States.

Victims of Natural and Created Disasters around the world.

Healing of relationships between the public and the police.

Peace and Justice near and far.

US Military around the globe.

Prayer Chaplain Ministry here at Parkway UCC.

From Maren Tirabassi, UCC pastor, on February 17

Greetings to my neighbors ... for my Muslim neighbors may the beginning of Ramadan this evening bring deep spiritual renewal and for my neighbors who celebrate the Lunar New Year, may the Year of the Horse, the Fire Horse, bring joy.

For people preparing to fast, a blessing.

For people wearing red, dancing in the streets, a blessing.

For people preparing to burn last year's palms into this year's ashes,

or dance in the street with Mardi Gras beads, a blessing.

Interrupting Power

Rachel Hackenberg

When King Ahasuerus was merry with wine, he commanded Queen Vashti to appear before him, in order to show the peoples and the officials her beauty—for she was fair to behold. But Queen Vashti refused. - Esther 1:10-12 (NRSV, adapted)

During the 180 days of King Ahasuerus's big bash, Queen Vashti was throwing her own party. While he wined and dined the officials, ministers, governors, generals, and nobles of the Persian Empire—from India to Ethiopia—Queen Vashti hosted a banquet for their wives, mistresses, baronesses, countesses, and noble women.

For 180 days, the international assembly of women ate and drank, rested and played, and politicked. In the midst of it all, Queen Vashti was the gracious diplomat ... until the king interrupted with a command: "Stop what you're doing, and come look pretty for these drunk men."

An interruption of her work.

A reduction of her diplomatic authority.

A power play against her bodily autonomy.

This is what power is. This is what power does. It interrupts and asserts its own agenda. "Come entertain us. Come work to make our lives easier. Stay quiet so we won't feel challenged. Comply with our expectations so we can show you off."

Queen Vashti assessed the king's interruption, his power, and used her own: "No."

Power is interruption: Violence interrupting life. Protest interrupting injustice. Chaos interrupting healing. Questions interrupting lies. We all interrupt and are interrupted, with assorted and rarely unbiased agendas, and not with equal systemic impact.

But one Power interrupts us all. The holy and eternal Interrupter persists in disruption: asserting breath in the midst of upheaval, interjecting promise in the midst of floods, providing welcome in the midst of hostility, interrupting injustice for the cause of life.

Prayer

God grant me the wisdom to recognize my power, the humility to accept yours, and the courage to interrupt for the sake of your reign.

Consider signing up to receive these UCC daily devotions
from our God is Still Speaking writers:

<https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/>

