

# HOLY VESSELS



A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY

## **“Treasure”**

*First Sunday in Lent*

*February 21, 2021*

### **GATHER**

*People gather around Jesus as his reputation becomes known from town to town. As we gather virtually or physically, we too are yearning for presence, for peace, for help.*

### **Prelude**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

### **Threshold**

Each of us is created a precious and holy vessel of embodied love. We have been through a harrowing time since last Lent that has shattered our sense of wholeness—body, mind, and spirit—like a glass vessel fractured into pieces. Let us enter a Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on Jesus, the Healer of our every ill.

**Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.**

Beach glass begins as something whole and yet discarded. As it is tumbled by the sea, it is broken and polished until it becomes a treasured “mineral gem.” We do not embrace that suffering is necessary or God-given, but that suffering is a part of life. When pain comes and brokenness enters our lives, Jesus reaches out to touch and remind us of the Treasure that we *all* are—worthy of new life in the midst of hopelessness. In a year when pandemic has wreaked havoc on our world, we begin by affirming our journey to physical health.

**Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.**

## **APPROACH**

*People opened their lives to Jesus. We are drawn to the Healer—opening our hearts with honesty about our lives and finding assurance that offers peace.*

## **Prayer of Confession**

*Leader:* Lent developed into a season of intense inward reflection and confession centuries after the life of Jesus. Yet, as we will see, Jesus encouraged people to open up about their lives—to speak truth—no matter how broken. This is the beginning of compassion for ourselves and others.

It is the beginning of healing. The Latin origins of the word “confess” is to “study and acknowledge.” This will be a season of studying how we can be a healing presence in our community. To do this, we acknowledge our need to restore our own Holy Vessels.

Let us pray:

Creator God,  
We are bodies fashioned by your hand in your own image,  
shapes and colors of diverse and immense beauty.  
And yet too often we have ignored the sacred nature of our physical lives.  
The Holy Vessels you have fashioned are tired and suffering,  
ravaged by months of disrupted rhythms and ailment.  
Our fragility has come into full view and we are frightened.  
We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away,  
sometimes even from our own needs.

Help us, Healer.  
Show us our strength.  
Forgive our inertia.  
Move us to move  
one step at a time toward greater care.

In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

*Silence*

**Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.**

**Assurance**

I invite you to feel a warmth begin to arise within the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. Imagine a warm orb of light deep within you. This warm glow begins to emerge from the recesses of your inner being to fill and flood your whole body until your skin is glowing with it, radiating outward. You are surrounded by light. Feel this warmth wrap you as a blanket of assurance.

Know this: God's love and grace surround you...  
No. Matter. What.  
You are a precious and holy vessel right now.  
Christ's light is a treasure given freely.  
For you, for me, for all.

Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you...  
and breathe out with the relief of assurance.

**Peace**

I invite you to imagine the warmth that surrounds you extending to those who may be next to you in close proximity. Imagine it extending beyond your walls to the neighborhood...  
the wider community...  
the church...  
and seeing it spread like the rising sun, let it expand to all the world.  
Let this be our peace. **Amen.**

If you have not already, I invite you to open your eyes.

The peace of Christ is with you.  
**And also with you.**

### **Opening Hymn**

*“Healer of Our Every Ill”*

GTG 795

*[consider gender-expansive language for verse 3, adapting “every sister, every brother” to  
“every sibling, sister, brother”]*

## **BELIEVE**

*People were fortified by Jesus’ words and deeds that revealed care for all—especially those marginalized. We strengthen our belief in the possibility for renewed health and vigor for all.*

### **Time for Children**

### **A Contemporary Word**

Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have - life itself.

— **Walter Anderson**

Some people spend so much time hunting treasure that they fail to see it all around them. It's like sifting through gold to find the silt.

— **Richard Paul Evans**

Where there is ruin, there is hope for a treasure.

— **Rumi**

### **Musical Proclamation**

*“Sacred the Body”*

GTG 27

## **An Ancient Word**

*Matthew 8: 1-4; 16-17*

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean." He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

### **Sermon**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

### **ASK**

*People who were healed by Jesus were not afraid to ask. And so we come before the Holy One, making our petitions and desires known, trusting the work of the Spirit.*

### **Song of Preparation**

*"Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole" (refrain only)*

*SongSelect #3315976*

**In your love, make us whole.  
May we rest in your compassion.  
Calm the lost, weary soul  
in the warmth of your love.  
May your peace fill our hearts.  
May we know the love of Jesus.  
By your grace, you console.  
Make us holy, make us whole.**

### **Prayers of the People**

Healer of our every ill,  
especially our malady of separation and fear,  
we come before you to make our petitions known.  
Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit.  
We know that already you are at work among us,  
showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time.

As demolished pieces that are treasured when found,  
we trust that beauty from brokenness is possible  
when we seek to bind together that which is wounded.  
We pray especially for those who have experienced  
the physical loss of family and friends in the pandemic  
and those who are still suffering the consequences of the illness.  
We pray for each person who suffers in body in other ways—  
weariness from inactivity or weariness from overactivity in this time.  
We pray for those whose treatment of maladies have been put on hold and those who suffered  
isolation in their illness, whatever the cause.  
We pray grateful thanks for the medical staff everywhere around the world who have shown  
unbelievable strength and stamina  
and we mourn the demise of too many caregivers  
who risked their lives for our sake.

We pray this day for...

## **Prayer of Jesus**

***“Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole”***

***(refrain)***

**In your love, make us whole.  
May we rest in your compassion.  
Calm the lost, weary soul  
in the warmth of your love.  
May your peace fill our hearts.  
May we know the love of Jesus.  
By your grace, you console.  
Make us holy, make us whole.**

## **KNOW**

*The parting words Jesus’ gave to those he healed were often as much balm as the healing act itself. We hear words of encouragement from the One who makes beauty from brokenness.*

## **Ritual Action for the Week**

The words of Jesus we heard in this week’s healing story were “I do choose. Be made clean!” Faced with a request, and given the choice, Jesus chooses to say “yes.” And he says “yes” to each precious and treasured life. Recovered wholeness is offered to everyone and will look different for each one. I invite you to take up a piece of beach glass now and examine it closely, noticing the worn edges and the color, feeling the texture and thickness. Examine it as a treasure that is completely unique, which of course it is.

Then shift your thinking to your own rough edges. What broken edges in your own life need help? What will you do in this Lent season to focus on healing of body, mind, and spirit?

Take a moment to think on this and then when you are ready, enclose the broken piece in your hand and hold it to your heart, breathing (“*spirare*”) deeply and inviting that Spirit to live and move in you in a special way over the next six weeks. Keep your piece close at hand... perhaps on your desk, nightstand, or pocket where you can feel it regularly this week.

## **RESPOND**

*Scriptural accounts of healing often end with responses from the “crowd” of witnesses. How will we proceed into the brokenness of this world and respond as the Body of Christ?*

### **Closing Song**

*“Jesus, Savior, Lord, Now to You I Come (Saranam, saranam)”  
GTG 789*

### **Commission**

Jesus’ healing actions often get “buzz” from onlookers. Some are amazed and in awe and sing praises. Some are bewildered and wonder at this teacher. Some are disgruntled and feel threatened by the boundaries he breaks and the change he invites. We are perhaps prone to all of these at one time or another. Our own work of recovery will sometimes feel immediately refreshing and sometimes it will demand uncomfortable effort. But the rewards are great.

We are also working toward something communal in this season. How can we as a church community become a “health hub” through our ministry and mission? The needs are so great, especially now. Throughout this time, I invite you to explore with us the possibilities for a new or renewed commitment to a contribution we can make at First Presbyterian Church of Monroe to our larger community’s effort to recover from this past year.

### **Charge and Benediction**

Now go with confidence  
as “Treasures of God,”  
recovering your depth of love for all  
and our joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:  
“I do choose you.”

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver  
Healing balm to your soul

and a spring in your step.

As you leave this space,  
May your mouth speak of God's goodness.  
May your arms hold those in need.  
May your feet walk toward justice.  
May your heart trust its worth.  
May your soul dance in God's grace—  
And may this be your holy rhythm—  
The rhythm of Again and again and again,  
Until God's promised day.  
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself.  
You are God's treasure.. a broken vessel...a holy vessel.  
So go with courage, go with heart, go in peace. **Amen.**

## **Threshold Into the World**

**Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.**

## **Postlude**

*"Worship series design and original music ©Worship Design Studio, adapted and used with permission.  
[www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels)*

*Last section of the charge and benediction used and adapted from a prayer by Sarah Are/ A Sanctified Art  
LLC/sanctified art.org*

Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #A-737704. All rights reserved."

CCLI Copyright License #11462454 CCLI Streaming License #20370027

**FPC Monroe Worship Team**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler, Pastor  
Rob Edwards, Minister of Music  
Helyn Schroeder, Liturgist  
Isaac Fankhauser, Sound Team  
Josh McMann, Sound Team  
Randy Stiffler, Sound Team



108 Washington Street  
Monroe, Michigan 48161  
734-242-1545