

HOLY VESSELS



A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY

“Safe Keeping”

February 28, 2021

Second Sunday in Lent

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

Liturgist

Threshold

We continue our Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives.

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

God gathers us as a Beachcomber gathers and marvels at every precious surviving piece of beach glass she finds. We are never alone, we are never lost to the One who seeks humanity’s wholeness. We affirm our commitment to be the Body of Christ that knows we cannot be personally healed until we see the interconnected community as part of the process of healing. Jesus has the power to re-vision the family of God in which false boundaries are overcome. In a year of devastating loss of livelihood, we consider the economic health that reimagines status quo.

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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.

Opening Prayer of Confession

Liturgist

Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels, which include the communities of which we are a part.

Let us pray:

God of All,
You created us for each other. You set in us a yearning for companionship and an empathy that binds us together, protecting each other and delighting in one another.
Yet too often we have broken down our relationships instead of building them up.
We have been set against one another with the lie of scarcity.
We have built systems and economies that widen the gap of resources rather than safeguarding equitable practices.
Too many, and growing numbers, are suffering hardship, food insecurity, joblessness.
We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away, sometimes even from the need in our own community.

Help us, Healer.
Show us our empathy.
Forgive our complacency.
Move us to move
one step at a time toward greater care for one another.

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

Silence

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Assurance
Liturgist

Again this week, I invite you to imagine a warmth begin to arise within the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. This warm orb of light is deep within you, a flame always there and ready when you need it. 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. This warmth that wraps you as a blanket of assurance is one you want to share. You want all to feel this presence, to kindle this hope.

Know this: This love and security is meant for all people.
No. Matter. What.

We are capable of sharing our light and not running out of “enough.”
Christ’s hospitality that broke through false boundaries points the way.
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
Liturgist

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
“Community of Christ”
Worship and Rejoice 615
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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
Mark Burrows

A Contemporary Word

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."
— **Margaret J. Wheatley**

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."
— **Coretta Scott King**

"I alone cannot change the world,
but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."
— **Mother Teresa**

Musical Proclamation

*“O, Christ the Healer We Have Come”
Fred Pratt Green; Hope Publishing
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An Ancient Word

Matthew 8: 5-13

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.” And he said to him, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.” And the servant was healed in that hour.

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)

Mark Friedman

Song Select #3315976

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**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

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

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 broken pieces scattered and separated,
we trust that you are seeking us, gathering us into wholeness,
and calling us to join you in the quest.
We pray especially for those who have experienced
the loss of livelihoods and economic security
and are feeling helpless to care for their families.
We pray for those whose businesses have gone under
or are on the precipice between survival or closure.
We pray for those whose disparity of resources
has been made even more pronounced during this pandemic.
We pray grateful thanks for the efforts of all who have been searching for solutions
and have given generously for months of their time and resources
to alleviate the suffering of those they know and do not know.
We ask for encouragement and passion to re-evaluate
how we as a church can help now and into the future.

We pray this day for...

*[continue in your familiar manner of praying... intercession, pastoral, etc.,
finishing with the Lord's Prayer]*

Prayer of Jesus

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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 will come..." When faced with a request, Jesus makes a move to seek out, to come to help one who was previously seen to be outside of help's embrace. He moves outward to gather in and heal someone unlikely to have crossed his path otherwise. All are within God's circle of Safe Keeping.

I invite you to take all your pieces of broken glass and put them in a bowl. As you do so, think about the people you have encountered or heard about in the last few months who are suffering lack of support. What could we do to reach out? How could we shift our focus on healing parts of the human community we spend little time thinking about?

To what part of our community shall we say "I will come..."?

Now shift your thinking to your need to be cared for. What do you need to feel safe? What connections do you need to strengthen...to heal any isolation you may feel? If you are in need of something, consider this an invitation to let someone know what *you* need without feeling embarrassment or shame about it. Always, Jesus invites us to ask.

Take a moment to think on this. Then when you are ready, pick up the container of broken pieces and breathe ("*spirare*") deeply, inviting, as you do, the Spirit of God... to live and move in you in a special way; to strengthen your connection to others and to show you how you can play a role in making someone's life more safe.

Keep the bowl in a place you can see 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

"The Lord Now Sends Us Forth"

Gerhard M. Cartford

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Charge

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Jesus' healing actions often get "buzz" from onlookers. In this week's story we do not know how his followers reacted to his words, but we can assume that it was hard to hear for some. Jesus makes sure to point out that the belief of this "outsider" and his care for his servant was something he didn't always see from the "insiders"—from the ones who profess to be "faithful." His words no doubt affirmed some and offended others. That's what happens when we get "called out," as we say. Perhaps we are in need of being "called out." Not in a way that shames but in a way that energizes. How could our faith call us out more and more until we cannot stand by as some are suffering?

As I said last week, we are working on healing for ourselves in this season, but we are also working toward something communal. 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 FPC Monroe Church to our larger community's effort to recover from this past year.

Blessing

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

Now go with confidence
that the Holy Beachcomber is gathering us all for "Safe Keeping,"
recovering our depth of love for all
and our joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:
"I will come."

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver
salve 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

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