

# HOLY VESSELS



A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY

## **“Restoration”**

*Fifth 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**

Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler

### **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.**

The demands of following Jesus are great. He shows us that sometimes we must make extraordinary efforts to move in a new direction. As we consider the health of humanity, we cannot ignore the need to heal the very planet that sustains us. We live in increasing chaos of a beleaguered environment and the hoarding of resources. We want to be “saved” by something or someone else, but we discover this week that we are in the boat with the One who shows us our power to turn it around, to calm the storm. We protect the jewel that is our home, restoring something beautiful from scars of the past.

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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**

*Charlotte Frary, Liturgist*

Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels, especially this holy container of life on which we live—this very planet.

Let us pray:

Life-giving God,

In the beginning, you created this universe with a phrase, “Let it be...”  
and the waters and dry land, the sky and the creatures were formed.

You set humanity among these wonders and invited us to care and honor all things.

We have not successfully answered that call.

Seeing the abundance as a feast that would never end, we gorged ourselves,  
taking more than we could replenish at a rate that could not be sustained.

We are beginning to comprehend the magnitude, beginning to see that things  
cannot just keep going “as usual” and not have dire consequences.

We are frightened, which is partly why we are slow to accept it.

But we now are witnesses to the forces of a world  
more broken than when we inherited it:  
water, wind, and wave, fire, drought, and earthquake  
that signal it is time to pay attention and to make real change.  
Too often we think there is nothing we can do—that the change required is too great.  
It all feels overwhelming and so we look away,  
sometimes even from the small things that could make a difference  
for our own community.

Help us, Healer.  
Show us our ability to chart a different course.  
Forgive our inaction.  
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*

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

### **Assurance**

*Charlotte Frary, Liturgist*

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 and it fills you with determination and courage. It floods your whole body until your skin is glowing with it, radiating outward. You feel strong.

Know this: Jesus asks us to do hard things, to make changes,  
*knowing* we are capable.  
No. Matter. What.  
We *can* change in order to heal our planet, Earth...our home.

The calm of Christ in the storm is available... 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**

*Charlotte Frary, 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.**

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

## **Opening Hymn**

*“All Things Bright and Beautiful”*

## **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**

A good person is the friend of all living things.  
– **Mohandas Gandhi**

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.  
– **John Muir**

Twenty five years ago people could be excused for not knowing much about, or doing much, about climate change. Today we have no excuse.

– **Desmond Tutu**

## **Musical Proclamation**

*“Bring Healing”*

## **An Ancient Word**

*Matthew 8:18-27*

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe then approached and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Another of his disciples said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

## **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”*

**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.**

### **Offering**

*Charlotte Frary, Liturgist*

### **Prayers of the People**

*Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler*

Healer of our every ill,  
especially our fractured creation,  
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 and transformation.  
You remind us that that you are in the boat with us in the midst of the storms of life.  
We give you thanks for the invitation to follow you,  
Even when you call us to crossover from one way of life to another.

We pray today for our Earth.  
We pray for clear eyes that see how our actions affect  
oceans, rivers and streams; meadows and marshes; forests and flowers; bees and butterflies;  
deer and dolphins; hummingbirds and hawks; polar bears and porpoises—  
all creatures great and small.

We give thanks for the courage of activists, who are calling us,  
to wake up  
Help us to act in the urgency of this moment  
to understand that we  
have it within our power  
to change  
and  
through change  
restore the earth's wholeness.

We pray this day for...

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**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**

Charlotte Frary, Liturgist

The words of Jesus we highlight this week from the healing story are “follow me and let the dead bury their own dead.” This may seem like harsh words. And yet we hear Jesus’ urgency. *Now* is the time to move. No matter how difficult, we cannot wait. We can make changes. We can face storms because we are a people led by the Healer, the Calm-in-the-Storm God can offer us faith in the midst of fear.

And so this week for our symbolic ritual action, we are going to restore some beauty by adding to the beauty of our glass pieces. This week you are invited to wrap some craft wire around one of your pieces of beach glass creating a pendant that can be hung in a window or you may simply prop a piece of your beach glass in a window as constant reminder of your role as “caretaker of the Earth,”

We invite you to take a photo if you can and email your photo to [info@monroefirst.org](mailto:info@monroefirst.org). We will use these images in our worship next 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**  
*“Touch the Earth Lightly”*

**Charge**

*Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler*

This week the reaction of the crowd in the story is amazement at Jesus’ connection to the cosmic forces of wind and wave. As scientists now try to teach us, all things are connected. We are part and parcel of all creation. Rather than dominion, we are to be a-tuned to all around us. We see the cry of creation in awakened natural disasters and we must heed the call not to hide in fear, but to work for healing.

And so in our communal discerning about how this church community could become a “health hub” through our ministry and mission, let us put our minds to imagining how we can learn about contributing to the beauty and healing of our environment. 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.

**Blessing**

*Rev. Dr. Doris Chandler*

Go with confidence  
That you can face any storm with Jesus in the boat of your life,

Go with confidence  
that the One Who Is Living Water  
is at work  
cleansing, renewing, and clarifying your life,  
recovering your depth of love for all  
and your joy of living in this world.

May these words of Jesus...”Follow me”  
ring in your ears.

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver  
a healing balm... 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**

"Restoration", Holy Vessels: A Lenten Journey of Recovery" Series. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels).  
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