

March 19, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Lent

**Fairmount Avenue
United Methodist Church**



www.faumc.net

Prelude

Adagio

Charles-Marie Widor

**Words of
Welcome**

Call to Worship

*Lord, Who Throughout
These Forty Days*

Adult Choir

Claudia F. Hernaman

Prayer of Invitation

Prayer of Gratitude

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

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God of Love,

*I must thank you for the range of
emotions in my heart—*

For the heartache that has
nearly gutted me,

For the love that has
completely unraveled me,

For the joy that feels almost
impossible to contain.

I assume you have given those
feelings to me as a gift,
a gift to help me imagine how
deeply you love.

For that, I am grateful.

*God of Wisdom,
I must thank you for this
aching soul—
For this hunger to learn
and grow,
For a longing to find beauty
in the world,
For a deep desire to be the best
version of myself for you.*

I assume you filled my soul
with longing
to help guide my feet
as a disciple.

For that, I am grateful.

*God of my heart and bones,
thank you for this body of mine—*
For my legs give me the chance
to run back to you,
My mind allows me to dream
of a better world,
And my blood reminds me
that I am the same as the
person next to me.

I assume you gave me a body
so that your story can be
embodied in me.

***For all these things and more,
I am grateful. Amen.***

Passing of the Peace

Let us greet each other
in the name of the Risen Christ.
Peace be with you.
And also with you.

“Open My Eyes, That I May See”

Hymn No. 454

WORDS and MUSIC: Clara H. Scott, 1895

*Open my eyes,
that I may see
glimpses of truth
thou hast for me,
place in my hands
the wonderful key
that shall unclasp
and set me free.*

refrain

*Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!*

*Open my ears,
that I may hear
voices of truth
thou sendest clear;
and while the wave-notes
fall on my ear,
everything false
will disappear.*

refrain

*Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!*

*Open my mouth
and let me bear
gladly the warm
truth everywhere;
open my heart
and let me prepare
love with thy children
thus to share.*

refrain

*Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!*

Children's Time

Children are invited to come forward
as parents are comfortable.

Please note that those who come forward may be visible on the livestream.

Prayer of Confession and Words of Forgiveness

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed
A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

For today's prayer of confession, we will pray with our whole selves—mind, body, heart, and soul—through a kinesthetic prayer. I invite you to listen and follow along by actively responding to the prompts I give you, as you are comfortable. Let us begin with open eyes and an open heart as I guide you through this time of prayer. Let us pray.

Jesus of Nazareth walked this earth seeing and giving to those in need— the Samaritan woman, the child, the blind man, the Pharisee— yet too often we close our eyes, allowing fear or prejudice to hold us back.

If you have ever ignored someone who was in need, please close your eyes.

Jesus modeled a life of grace, whispering from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Even with his example, we struggle to live lives of grace, often speaking words of hostility and shame over forgiveness or patience.

If you have ever dealt harshly with someone, embracing hostility instead of peace, or shame instead of grace, please clench your fists

Jesus gave thanks before breaking bread, modeling a life of gratitude before consumption. However, we easily find ourselves in entitled mindsets and habits, taking this earth and God's creation for granted, consuming before caring.

If you have ever chosen consumption without gratitude, or comfort over care, please cross your arms.

Jesus said from the cross, “Behold your son; behold your mother.” It was a reminder that we belong together, as all of us are made in God’s good image. However, too often we forget that we are worthy of belonging, denying God’s image in ourselves or others.

If you have ever been ashamed of who you are, or have denied the divine image in another, bow your head.

Friends, this is what sin feels like— being cut off from others, closed off from the world, left in the dark, alone and disconnected from God. However, God knows us and loves us. Like a mother with her children, God will not abandon us!

Thus, if you have ever seen someone in need and responded with care, open your eyes.

If you have ever seen God in another, or trusted God's promise that you are worthy of love, lift your head.

If you have ever chosen forgiveness and grace over hatred and hostility, unclench your fists.

And if you have ever chosen gratitude over entitlement, or willingly made a sacrifice for the care of God's creation, uncross your arms now.

If your eyes are still closed, open them.

If your head is still bowed, raise it.

If your fists are still clenched, release them.

If your arms are still crossed, uncross them,
for God's grace is for all of us no matter who
we are or what we've done or left undone.

Friends, hear and believe the good news of the gospel: this is what the kingdom of God feels like— eyes open, heads up, connected and united in grace.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Presentation of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory Anthem

O Sacred Head

Heritage Ringers

arr. Jason Krug

Offertory Response

Hymn No. 95

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God all creatures here below;
praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

“The Summons”

TFWS No. 2130

WORDS: John Bell

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MUSIC: *Kelvingrove*, Traditional Scottish; arr. by Josh Bell
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*Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go
where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?*

*Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?*

*Will you care
for cruel and kind
and never be the same?*

*Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?*

*Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?*

*Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set
the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?*

*Will you love the “you” you hide
if I but call your name?*

*Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?*

*Will you use
the faith you’ve found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and
sound in you and you in me?*

*Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love
and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.*

Congregational Prayer

We now offer petitions of joy and concern from prayer cards.

Lord in your mercy... *hear our prayer.*

In gratitude let us pray to the Lord... *hear our prayer.*

Prayers lifted during this time are shared with our Prayer Chain, a group of individuals who have covenanted to being in prayer with and for our congregation.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Words

Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

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*God, there are so many words
in a day—*

*“I loves yous” whispered toward
the hearts of loved ones,*

*Prayers mumbled under anxious
breaths,*

*Judgments passed too loudly and
too close to home.*

*There are so many words in a day,
So for a moment, we pray—
Still the world around us so that
we might hear your Word,
Read to us aloud in scripture with
your still, small voice.
For we know that the grass
withers and the flowers fade,
but the Word of our God shall
stand forever. Amen.*

Scripture Reading

John 9:1-41

¹ As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷ saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he."

¹⁰ But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”

²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." ²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵ He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.”

³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

Sermon

A BLIND BODY

“Sacred the Body”

TFWS No. 2228

Ruth Duck (1 Cor. 3:16; 13:4-7)

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*Sacred the body
God has created,
temple of Spirit
that dwells deep inside.
Cherish each person;
nurture creation.
Treat flesh as holy,
that love may abide.*

*Bodies are varied,
made in all sizes,
pale, full of color,
both fragile and strong.
Holy the difference,
gift of the Maker,
so let us honor
each story and song.*

*Love respects persons,
bodies and boundaries.
Love does not batter,
neglect, or abuse.
Love touches gently,
never coercing.
Love leaves the other
with power to choose.*

*Holy of holies,
God ever loving,
make us your temples;
indwell all we do.
May we be careful,
tender and caring,
so may our bodies
give honor to you.*

Benediction

Choral Response

Abide with Us, Our Savior

Adult Choir

Melchior Vulpius

Postlude

Fugue in D Minor

J.S. Bach

Go in Peace.

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