



HOLY VESSELS



A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY

www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels

Stories
March 7, 2021
3rd Sunday in Lent

GUESTS, Welcome to worship. To learn more about us, please visit our website at www.unionucc.org or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/unionneffs. If you would like us to follow up with you contact Pastor Kris at 610-767-6961, pastorkris@unionucc.org

NEW MEMBERS: For more information email Pastor Kris. pastorkris@unionucc.org or call the church office to speak to her.

We believe in extravagant welcome. We believe in God's inclusive love. We start worship with a greeting that reflects that welcome and love.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey and
faith's journey
You are welcome here.

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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

Wonderful Words of Life

Philip P. Bliss

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opening Threshold

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

SUNG (SOLO):

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

Leader: Those who collect beach glass often become “archeologists”—seeking out any markings or clues as to the story of the original piece. It often takes much time to bring out the truth behind it. This week we acknowledge the power of truth-telling as a healing property. There are stories that have shaped our lives, leaving us without the ability to see who we truly are in the eyes of God and leaving us without the ability to speak the depth of our stories of struggle. We focus on the importance of recovery of mental health, reclaiming our sense of who we are and being able to proclaim new redemptive stories of divine worth.

SUNG:

**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: Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels, and that the health of our minds deeply affects our physical and spiritual health.

Let us pray:

ALL: Centering and Calming Divine Breath of God, You gifted us with amazing minds, capable of so many things. You gave us the ability to think and feel, imbuing us with discernment of thought and emotion. Like our physical bodies, sometimes this aspect of our selves is beleaguered.

We struggle under the strain of disappointment, despair, and delusion.

Too often we hide this, afraid of what others might think of our difficulties in managing or moving forward, even in the face of devastating circumstances.

Too often we perpetuate the stigma of a less-than-perfect state of mind by shaming ourselves and others.

Millennia of misunderstanding compounds our fear. We label and belittle, all the while turning the hatred upon ourselves,

for no one is immune from troubles of the mind at some point.

So many are suffering now, God, weary and distraught, grieving and at the end of their rope.

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 capacity for compassion.
Forgive our inattention.
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

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

Assurance

Leader: I invite you to imagine and search for a warmth at the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. This warm orb of light is deep within you, although sometimes it feels dulled, even cold. If it feels this way now, allow this. Do not judge yourself. Perhaps you DO feel this warmth and all feels right with the world. This just is. You likely will not always feel that way. Whether or not you feel the warmth of peace and assurance right now, this does not make you right or wrong, good or bad. It just makes you human. And you are not alone. Perhaps you can imagine the warmth coming from someone whose presence fills you with comfort. See it radiate from them to you, as it does when you need it most.

Know this: You are accepted.

No. Matter. What.

Accepting the truth of our difficulties is part of the journey of recovery.

Sharing our stories of difficulty can open the way for healing.
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.

HYMN #23 There's a Wideness in God's Mercy
(New Century Hymnal, Black Hymnal)

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.

There's no place where earthly sorrows
Are more felt than in God's heaven;
There's no place where earthly failings
have such kindly judgement given.

2. For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more faithful,
we would gladly trust God's word,
and our lives would show thanksgiving
for the goodness of our God.

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.

A Contemporary Word

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside
you.”

— **Maya Angelou**

“Sharing our truths can provide the opportunity for great
healing.”

— **Kristen Noel**

“Tell the story of the mountain you climbed.
Your words could become a page in someone else’s survival
guide.”

— **Morgan Harper Nichols**

“Part of the healing process is sharing with other people who
care.”

— **Jerry Cantrell**

Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process
is the bravest thing that we will ever do.”

— **Brené Brown**

“Sometimes the most healing thing to do is remind ourselves
over and over and over,
other people feel this too.”

— **Andrea Gibson**

“The courage it takes to share your story might be the very thing
someone else needs to open their heart to hope.”

— **Unknown**

“Your heartache is someone else’s hope.
If you make it through, somebody else is going to make it
through.

Tell your story.”

- **Kim McManus**

An Ancient Word

Matthew 9: 27-33

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, “See that no one knows of this.” But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that

district. After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel."

MUSIC OFFERING

The Breakup Song
Ann Snyder

Francesca Battistelli

MESSAGE

Pastor Kris Snyder-Samuelson

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
Song Select #3315976
Ann Snyder

SUNG:

**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

Leader: Healer of our every ill,
especially our malady of stigmatized fear of mental illness,
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.

You have stamped each one of us as “worthy.”
We give you thanks that your mercy is wide
and your faithfulness to us not depend upon
having our feelings sorted out or our sense of well-being
secure.
You are not waiting for us to “get our act together”
before
offering us your love and grace.

We pray especially for those who have experienced
heightened and acute mental and emotional difficulties
as a result
of this past year of isolation and fear.
We pray for those who feel far from hope
and we mourn those who could not find a lifeline to
survive this hardship.
We pray for those who find themselves without access
to adequate care,
someone to talk to, or appropriate resources to steady
their hearts and minds.
We give thanks for those who are telling their stories,
showing us how to open our hearts to help others
and offering ripples of healing in the community.
We pray grateful thanks for progress toward holistic
healthcare
and the efforts of all who are working to de-stigmatize
mental illness,
making it easier to ask for, and get, the help so
desperately needed.
We ask for courage and encouragement to re-evaluate
how we as a church can help now and into the future.

We pray this day for...

Prayer of Jesus

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 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.

SUNG:

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.

Reflection and Action for the Week

The words of Jesus we heard in this week's healing story were "Do you believe I am able to do this?" Jesus' question invites us to consider our own belief in transformation. He invites us to step into a renewed vision of our lives, to speak into being a new story, not be bound by the stories of the past, inscribed on us by others, that may be oppressing and limiting us.

Beach glass is usually somewhat cloudy when dry. When it comes into contact with water, it becomes clear and bright. As you pray for clarity this week, ask for a new way to see the struggles you may be experiencing. Ask for understanding and a way forward.

Invite the Spirit to live and move and transform you and others who need clarity for their lives.

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?

COMMISSION

Leader: Each week we look at the reaction of the crowd in the healing story. This week the crowd was amazed and cried out that nothing like it had ever been seen before. How interesting that the crowd is “seeing” something for the first time, just like the blind man is brought to sight! Could it be that this is as important to the story as the ones who received physical healing? How could we open our eyes, figuratively, in new ways? What do we need to envision anew?

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 Union UCC to our larger community’s effort to recover from this past year.

Blessing

Leader: Now go with confidence
that the One Who Is Living Water
is already cleansing, renewing, and clarifying our lives,
recovering our depth of love for all
and our joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:
“Do you believe it is possible?”

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver
salve to your soul
and a spring in your step.
Amen.

Threshold Into the World

SUNG: ALL

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

Postlude

There is a Fountain
Early American Melody

Tune: Cleansing Fountain,

Congratulations and blessings on our Baptism families today.

Evie Carmen Fetherman, child of Melissa and Robert
Fetherman

Lainey Rae Ritter, child of Alexis and Nicholas Ritter

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Donate to God's Mission and Ministry at UNION UCC

Easter Mission-

Lehigh Conference of Church and the Parkland Cares Food Pantry: Check donations may be made through the "Easter Mission" envelope in your envelop pack or in any envelope marked Easter Mission. Checks to "Union UCC" and mail them to church.

Give online at <http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/> for Easter Mission.

OFFERING ENVELOPES you can mail your envelopes to the church. The church address is on one side, just add a stamp.

ELECTRONIC GIVING This is a great time to try **e-giving!** Choose a weekly, semi-monthly or monthly donation to be transferred electronically. Fill out the form at <http://www.unionucc.org/egive.pdf> and return it to the church office. financialmanager@unionucc.org

DONATE ONLINE with your Credit or Debit Card

Go to <http://www.unionucc.org/resources/giving-and-sponsorship/ways-to-give/> and click **GIVE ONLINE**.

AMAZON SMILE Donate to Union UCC, Neffs (Search by zip code 18065) while you shop at Amazon. <https://smile.amazon.com>.

EVIDENCE OF STEWARDSHIP LAST SUNDAY

Offering (e-giving, envelopes, and plate)	
Last Week	\$6,762
Calendar 2021 (January)	\$30,541
Calendar 2020 (January)	\$35,077
Change from Last Year	-12.9%
Budget (July-Jan.)	\$270,560
Actual (July-Jan.)	\$244,882
Giving vs. Budget	-9.5%
<i>Additional financial information available in Consistory Minutes</i>	

2021 Donations to the Northern Lehigh Food Bank:	
Last Week:	100lbs, \$
Total YTD:	979 lbs, \$107

Blanket Sunday
\$2,041.50

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS SPONSORS:

Blessings on our baptism families- Pastor Kris

Your support is especially important now as we work to provide spiritual care and connection for members and the community through Facebook posts, ads, and online worship.

Be a sponsor for \$20, send to Union UCC through your offering envelope or online marked Spread the Good News.

Contact Marissa to sign up for a certain date or to sponsor in honor or memory of someone.