

RUTHERFORD CONGREGATIONAL

United Church of Christ

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No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Online / Streaming Worship

March 22, 2020, 10:30 A.M.

WELCOME

Welcome to online worship with the Rutherford Congregational Church.

For your benefit, we have posted a link to the PDF of this morning's order of worship on our website's home page at www.rccucc.com. I hope you have had an opportunity to see the PDF, if not, take a few moments to do so during our Centering Music. Feel free to download and open the PDF to view it, or, print it if you wish, and follow along with us. Our members and regular attendees can also find it in their email Inboxes. If you are not on our email list, and would like to be, please send us a message via either Facebook Messenger, or, at info@rccucc.com.

During this period of anxiety and turmoil, should you wish to speak with Pastor Ron, please call him directly at (201) 838-4254 to share a phone conversation or schedule a visit together via Facetime, Skype or Zoom, whichever is most convenient for you.

Throughout this pandemic, may I remind you, that here in this local congregation of the United Church of Christ, now more than ever, '*No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.*'

A TIME OF CENTERING

Consolator, Come Ye Disconsolate
Arr. by J. Bert Carlson

The following lyrics (adapted by Pastor Ron) are included for your reflection:

*Come, you disconsolate, where'er you languish;
come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.*

*Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
earth has no sorrows that God cannot heal.*

*Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!
Here speaks the Comforter, in mercy saying,
"Earth has no sorrows that God cannot cure."*

INVOCATION

HYMN

God Is My Shepherd

*Brother James' Air
The New Century Hymnal (479)*

God is my shepherd, I'll not want, I feed in pastures green.
God grants me rest and bids me drink from waters calm and clean.
Through daily tasks, I'm blessed and led by One I have not seen.

Restored to life each morning new, I rise up from the dust
to follow God whose presence gives me confidence and trust.
I praise the name of God today; in God I put my trust.

When I must pass through shadowed vale, where loss and death await,
I will not fear for God is there, my shepherd strong and great,
whose rod and staff will comfort me and all my fears abate.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Great Shepherd,

**we thank you for finding us and bringing us to this time of prayer.
We have wandered far from the paths of integrity, justice, and peace
that you have set before us.**

**We are ashamed of some things we do when we think no one will find
out.**

We are quick to judge others and to excuse ourselves.

We want to decide who is acceptable to you and who is not.

**Surely, we persuade ourselves, you prefer people like us
and not those who appear, believe, or act differently.**

**Even as we say those words, we know we are not in tune with your way.
Forgive us, we pray, and help us to change. Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

RESPONSE

Enter My Heart

James F. D. Martin
Sing! Prayer and Praise

Enter my heart, enter my heart, O Spirit of pow'r and love.
May I proclaim your holy name. O Spirit, enter my heart.

Enter my mind, enter my mind, O Spirit of pow'r and love.
In me increase your holy peace. O Spirit, enter my mind.

TIME FOR OUR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Psalm 23

from www.wholepeopleofgod.com curriculum

RESPONSE

Enter My Heart

James F. D. Martin
Sing! Prayer and Praise

Enter my life, enter my life, O Spirit of pow'r and love.
May I fulfill your holy will. O Spirit, enter my life.

READING FROM THE GOSPELS

John 9:1-41 (NRSV)

A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

¹ As [Jesus] 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^[a] must work the works of him who sent me^[b] 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 the man." 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."

*[The balance of the Gospel lesson is included below
for your private reading and personal meditation.]*

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

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." But 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^[c] to be the Messiah^[d] 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, and 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.

Spiritual Blindness

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 near 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.

Footnotes:

- a. [John 9:4](#) Other ancient authorities read *I*
- b. [John 9:4](#) Other ancient authorities read *us*
- c. [John 9:22](#) Gk *him*
- d. [John 9:22](#) Or *the Christ*
- e. [John 9:35](#) Other ancient authorities read *the Son of God*
- f. [John 9:36](#) *Sir* and *Lord* translate the same Greek word
- g. [John 9:38](#) *Sir* and *Lord* translate the same Greek word

MEDITATION

Rev. Ronald E. Verblauw

HYMN

God Is My Shepherd

Brother James' Air
The New Century Hymnal (479)

No enemy can overcome, no p'wer on earth defeat
the ones anointed by God's grace and fed with manna sweet.
My cup is filled and overflows as I my Savior greet.

Goodness and mercy all my days will surely follow me;
and where God reigns in heav'n and earth, my dwelling place will be.
My shepherd blesses, care, and leads through all eternity.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Joys & Concerns
Pastoral Prayer

*all this we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ
who taught us to pray, saying:*

Prayer of our Savior

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERTORY TIME

HYMN

Open My Eyes That I May See

Clara H. Scott

The United Methodist Hymnal (454)

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 ears, 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 heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

BLESSING

* POSTLUDE

Resources used in preparation of this week's liturgy and the devotional materials following were:

God's Vision is Broad and Vast: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday of Lent was written by the Rev. Kim Wood, Acting Associate Conference Minister, Illinois Conference, UCC.

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Lavon Bayler, *Taught By Love: Worship Resources For Year A*, (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2002).

Kimberly Bracken Long, Ed., *Feasting on the Word: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013).

The New Century Hymnal, Copyright 1995, The Pilgrim Press.

Sing! Prayer and Praise, Copyright 2009, The Pilgrim Press.

The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship, Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House.

Revised Common Lectionary Readings
Sunday, March 22, 2020
Lent 4

*1 Samuel 16:1-13 * Psalm 23 * Ephesians 5:8-14 * John 9:1-41*

Questions for Reflection This Week

Samuel is told that God does not look upon outward appearances, but looks upon the heart. Then God chooses David, the youngest son of Jesse, to be Israel's next king. We know that as he grew and as life became very challenging, King David's heart was not pure. He was a mixture of great courage and faithfulness – and great sin and failure.

*What do you suppose God saw and loved in David's heart?
 What do you think God loves when God looks upon your own heart?*

A Morning Household Prayer

*Good morning, Lord.
 This day has dawned with the gift of sunlight,
 and I awaken from sleep into the light and grace of Christ.
 Thank you for this new day.
 Stay with me, I pray,
 shepherding me through all that the day will hold.
 Lead me into pleasant places,
 and give me the provisions I will need if I find myself in difficulty or danger.
 Whenever the cup of gladness overflows,
 help me to recognize that it is filled with your goodness and mercy.
 In praise and anticipation, I begin this day; in Jesus' name. Amen.*

An Evening Household Prayer

*With the night, Good Lord, comes rest, and a chance for my soul to be restored.
 You are with me in this and every darkness, so I will not be afraid.
 For all I have seen with my own eyes today,
 for all others have helped me to see, I give you thanks.
 For those things that I did not notice:
 signs of beauty and kindness,
 evidences of your grace,
 I pray that you will improve the eyes of my faith
 so that I can see you more clearly,
 love you more dearly,
 and follow you more nearly tomorrow,
 and all my tomorrows.
 In the name of your Son, my Savior, I pray. Amen.*