

March 1, 2026 + 10:30 A.M.

Second Sunday of Lent

We Join in Worship

Liturgist: Vimary Couvertier Cruz

*If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker, or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of our Prayground, the extra space across the aisle from the sound booth.*

PRELUDE When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Russell Hancock Miles

WELCOME

CHORAL INTROIT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

\*THE PEACE OF CHRIST

\*CALL TO WORSHIP (Adapted from *Psalms* 121)

Leader: We lift up our eyes to the mountains—from where will our help come?

ALL: **Our help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.**

Leader: The LORD will not let our feet be moved; the LORD who keeps us will not slumber.

ALL: **The LORD who keeps us will neither slumber nor sleep.**

Leader: The LORD is our keeper; the LORD is our shade at our right hands.

ALL: **The sun shall not strike us by day, nor the moon by night.**

Leader: The LORD will keep us from all evil; the LORD will keep our lives.

ALL: **The LORD will keep our going out and our coming in from this time on and forevermore.**

\*OPENING HYMN: “In the Cross of Christ I Glory” (84)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: Paul writes, “As we work together, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.”  
Together let us confess our vanity.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

**God of grace, we join our hearts in confessing unto you. We confess that we trust in the snake oils of this world over the anointing oil that you offer us. We buy into the scams that corporations and politicians try to sell us, accepting their fraud as our truth. Forgive us. Remind us that truth can only come from you. Draw our eyes back to cross upon which your Son was raised as a beacon of that truth. Anoint us with your holy oil once more. In the name of Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, we pray. Amen.**

KYRIE

**Lord, have mercy upon us.**

**Christ, have mercy upon us.**

**Lord, have mercy upon us.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Friends, hear the good news. Now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation!

ALL: **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!**

## GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

### STATEMENT OF FAITH: (*The Apostles' Creed*)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

We Hear God's Word
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### EMBODIED WORD FOR DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

#### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: (Unison)

Saving Spirit, as you led Jesus into the wilderness and gathered the wild beasts and angels to surround him, gather us around your Word and lead us into your wisdom that we might be equipped to follow your Son on this Lenten path. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON:        *Numbers 21:4-9*

EPISTLE LESSON:                *2 Corinthians 6:1-13*

GOSPEL LESSON:                *John 3:1-17*

SERMON                              From Snake Oil to Anointing Oil

MUSICAL MEDITATION        *The Upper Room*

We Respond in Faith
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### THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

#### INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

#### GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Leader:        The Lord be with you.

**ALL:            And also with you.**

Leader:        Lift up your hearts.

**ALL:            We lift them to the Lord.**

Leader:        Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**ALL:            It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

... And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

... And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **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 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.**

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Our Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

### **BREAKING THE BREAD AND POURING THE CUP**

Leader: The bread of heaven. The cup of the new covenant. The gifts of God for the people of God.

**ALL: Let us keep the feast!**

### **COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE**

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

### **OFFERING INVITATION**

Leader: God so loved the world that God gave God's only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. As we give our tithes and offerings today, let us commit to anointing others with God's love. Please place your offering in the plate as it is passed. If you are worshiping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website. Now let us practice stewardship as we listen to today's offertory.

**OFFERTORY** Break Thou the Bread of Life

R.H. Miles

### **\* DOXOLOGY:**

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

### **\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)**

**God of grace, we dedicate our gifts to you and to the work of spreading your love. Please continue to lift up your Son so that we know which way to go. In the name of Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, we pray. Amen.**

## We Go Into the World

\* **CLOSING HYMN:** “Lift High the Cross” (371)

### **BENEDICTION**

### **CHORAL BENEDICTION**

**POSTLUDE**      To God Be the Glory

Fanny Crosby/W.H. Doane

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\* So that we can properly greet people who come to the building during Sunday morning worship, Door A will be the only unlocked external door during the worship service.

### **PEEK AT THE WEEK:**

SUNDAY 3/1:	SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT Adult Study – 9:00 AM Worship in Person & Online – 10:30 AM COMMUNION
MONDAY 3/2:	GA – 6:30 PM AI-Anon – 7:00 PM
TUESDAY 3/3:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) Deacons – 6:30 PM AA – 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY 3/4:	Private Flute Lessons 2-8 PM (FH) Lenten Study 7-8 PM (Zoom) GA – 7:00 PM
THURSDAY 3/5:	Choir – 7:00 PM
SATURDAY 3/7:	Heather Casiano FH 12-4 PM AA – 6:30 PM
SUNDAY 3/8:	DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **LENT PRAYER ACTIVITY STATIONS** There are Lenten Prayer Stations set up in the church library room (across the hall from the church office) and in the narthex. The prayer stations are appropriate for all ages, so you are encouraged to share this space with the children, youth and adults in your life. The prayer stations will be available on Sundays before and after worship, and during regular church office hours (Mon. –Thurs., 8 am to noon). If you cannot come to the church and would like an at-home version of the stations, please contact Heather Casiano at [hcasiano@fpchighland.org](mailto:hcasiano@fpchighland.org), or call the church office.
- **LENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET** The Ministry of Faith Development is once again providing a Lenten devotional booklet. This year’s devotional is titled “Discipleship in a Divided Age,” from the Presbyterian Outlook, and guides readers to journey through Matthew’s Gospel to discover how Jesus leads us toward humility, courage, compassion and faithful discipleship amid the fractures of our age. The booklet provides a daily Scripture, a focus verse, a theologically rich reflection, guided questions, and a closing prayer. This Lenten devotional will be available in time for Ash Wednesday: emailed to those on our email list and mailed to those who don’t have email. We have a few extra printed copies in the narthex for those who prefer a printed version and do not have access to a printer.

- **LENTEN STUDY AND PRACTICE WITH PASTOR TYLER** Once again, Pastor Tyler will be leading us in a special Lenten Study and Practice during the season of Lent. Join in each Wednesday of Lent, Feb. 25 - April 1, from 7-8 pm online on Zoom (During our usual BYOB time). This year's theme is "I Lift My Eyes Up to the Mountains." *Psalm 121* is a powerful salve in times of great challenge and need. We will explore it and other mountain passages as we seek hope and healing. All are welcome! The sessions will be recorded for those who would like to participate but cannot make the live sessions on Wednesdays. The Zoom link is sent out via email weekly; if you are not currently receiving this email and would like to, please contact Kristen in the church office.
- **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING PC(USA) SPECIAL OFFERING** We will be participating in this offering throughout Lent, with our fish banks to come back Easter Sunday. In doing so, we create possibility for people forced to flee their homes in search of safety. We support recovery efforts when disasters devastate communities. We empower partners to build sustainable futures. We walk alongside our siblings to work for more just immigration laws and processes. Our gifts show people they are not alone and that people they don't know see them and care enough to respond.
- **TRISTAN CASIANO'S EAGLE SCOUT CEREMONY** All members of FPCH are invited to Tristan Casiano's Eagle Scout Ceremony and subsequent luncheon on March 7th at 1 PM. Please RSVP to Heather Casiano so we know how much food to have.
- **"THE BIBLE IN TODAY'S WORLD"** class meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am in the middle classroom (across from Pastor Tyler's office). This group is reading through the book, "A is for Alabaster" by Anna Carter Florence. Each week is independent of the other weeks, so come as you are able. If you need a book, or for any other questions, contact Heather Casiano.
- **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!** If you don't already follow us on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so @firstpchighland on both Facebook and Instagram.
- **INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF FPCH?** You are always welcome here, whether a member or not! If you are interested in joining as a member, though, we would love to have you! Please talk to Pastor Tyler if you would like to learn more.

**Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:**

- **BLESSING BOX** Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates!
- **HELP STOCK OUR PANTRY!** Please pick up a beautifully decorated grocery bag in the narthex and fill it to help the church's food pantry.

## Prayer List

Anthony  
Brady Vanes  
George Griner  
Guy Hendricks  
Bill and Anettia Holmes  
David Markley  
David Kingen  
Diana and Ray Mendoza  
Janet Orem  
Cindy Waltz and Sister  
Yvonne Suroviak  
Georgette Sknerski  
Jakob Holden  
Denise Matthys  
Jan Oprea  
Florance Cody  
Kathy & Chuck Pumnea  
Laura Buono Domsic  
The Windstrups  
Rick Parker  
Gary Everhart  
Darlene O'Brien  
Doug & Sue Matthews  
Janet Terpstra  
Glen Nahler  
Tom  
David Hamblin  
Jana Tolley  
Larry & Bonnie Perryman  
Delta Rose  
Winnie Owen  
Breeanne  
Mom Bechtler  
Victor  
Marian Clayton  
Ella P  
Melissa J.

Rita Stronczek  
Keren, Zuriel, and Gedeon  
Edna Cruz  
Charlie  
Jerry & Rena Martinez  
Nicole  
Greg  
Pastor Jane  
Mary Ellen Edeus  
Jane and David  
Flora R.  
Tyler Gall  
Phil  
Luana Sulkowski  
Sonny Buono  
Shannon Sutton  
Robin  
Eunice  
Betsy  
David  
Trina & Scott  
Joe & Kathy  
Breanne Polan  
Tammy  
Alex  
Ben  
Mike Kelly  
Sue Heth  
Ron Toren  
Tony  
Mildred  
Neal  
Rita  
Carolyn  
Leroy Fassett  
Barb

## Numbers 21:4-9

4 From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, but the people became discouraged on the way. 5 The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” 6 Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” 9 So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

## 2 Corinthians 6:1-13

6 As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, “At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup> We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, <sup>9</sup> as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

<sup>11</sup> We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. <sup>12</sup> There is no restriction in our affections but only in yours. <sup>13</sup> In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also.

## John 3:1-17

3 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

<sup>11</sup> “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

## From Snake Oil to Anointing Oil

*Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; John 3:1-17*

*Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.*

This passage, quite frankly, terrifies me. I, like many of my fellow humans, have an admittedly unjust and unjustified fear of snakes. I grew up out in the country, and there were often garter snakes and black snakes that prowled the garden or ended up being sucked up into baler as we baled the hay. These were really harmless and actually did us a favor by keeping the rats and other critters away. But they ALWAYS frightened me. And I will never forget the first time I witnessed an actual venomous snake, when my mom pointed out a water moccasin winding its way down the creek behind my Grandma Virginia's home. It was mesmerizing and beautiful. But more than anything I was SCARED witless. We humans have had a long, contentious history with snakes, dating back to the time that most infamous of serpents persuaded the first humans to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the Creator cursed it to crawl on its belly, forever to be bruised by human feet and forever to bite human heels. This story from the time of creation makes the passage all the more potent. The Israelites who have been wandering in the desert for many years, variously experiencing hunger, thirst, and despair, are now beset by a plague of snakes, for them and for many of us the symbol of all that is evil. And I thought I had it bad with a few harmless snakes and the water moccasin! Today the lands of Egypt and Palestine have no fewer than 25 species of venomous snakes. And who knows how many more there were back then, before our toxic economies and industries started making species extinct!

And the Israelites at this point had been **through it**. They had been wandering for years without any end in sight. They had been having trouble finding enough water to drink, and they were sick of eating the same bread day after day after day. Unsurprisingly, there had also been a lot of infighting between the people, quibbling over who should be in power and in what direction the society of the people should go. Sound familiar? This, of course, is not an unfamiliar dynamic for us humans today. People get caught up only in that which seems to be going wrong, so-called leaders fight with each other rather than foster progress for the people, and there is no true vision as to which way society should go. And all too often **bitterness** and **complaining** rear their ugly heads, much like how the king cobra rears back, ready to strike.

None of this was new to the Israelites either. Such had been the case since the exodus, and they had never been quiet about it. So what made this situation different? Well, at this point in history, the Israelites, alongside their leader Moses, were in a state of GRIEF. In the chapter immediately prior to this, we learn that Moses' siblings Aaron and Miriam had died. **Aaron**, the mouthpiece of the exodus and the journey, the priest who spoke for his brother Moses and thus sometimes even for YHWH, the flawed but relatable man who was truly **in it** with the people through their worst and best times. And **Miriam**—OH MIRIAM!—the prophetess of the exodus and the journey, the one who sang the Israelites to victory, the fierce woman who sought to protect her people at any cost. Both of Moses's siblings, these leaders of the people, had just died within a very short time of each other. And when we meet the Israelites in this serpentine story, we meet a people in the throes of grief.

There is a Jewish tradition that claims that because of Miriam's righteousness there was always a well of water that followed the people up until her death. Given the power of this woman, I can believe it! It is no coincidence that at this specific point in the journey, right after her death, all the water seems to have dried up. I know that the author of *Numbers* blames the plague of snakes on YHWH. I recently read a story, though, about how in 2009 when the Euphrates and Tigris rivers—two of the very rivers mentioned in the time of the Garden of Eden—started to dry up in Iraq, swarms of snakes started attacking people. When the waters dry up, snakes are displaced and go where the people are. The way I see it, these snakes in the story were naturally responding to the same loss of water as the people. They were thirsty, hungry, and hangry. It is YHWH, then, who gives Moses the solution: *"Make a poisonous snake and place it on a pole. Whoever is bitten can look at it and live."* And Moses made a bronze snake and placed it on a pole. If a snake bit someone, that person could

look at the bronze snake and live. YHWH saw the people suffering, responded to their cry, and gave them a way to **heal**. And it was a remarkable method of healing—a snake as antidote for the snake venom. **The instrument of death was transformed into the source of life!**

And as we have seen, loved ones, the people did not need to be healed *only* of their **physical** snakebites! They had been bitten by drought. They had been bitten by famine. They had been bitten by the quarrels of those with power. They had been bitten by displacement. They had been bitten by **grief**. And as I look out at the community of the First Presbyterian Church of Highland and at our world writ large today, I see that there have been **many snakebites**. I see the venoms of cancers and cardiac problems, depression and diabetes, arthritis and Alzheimer's, amongst ourselves and those closest to us. I see the venoms of division, bitterness, and perpetual complaint that so plagued the Israelites and now plague our everyday discourse as a society. I see the serpents of corporate greed. Of policies and pollution that take away our water, our food, our very air. Of human trafficking and child exploitation. Of mass incarceration and mass deportation. And underpinning it all and as a result of it all, there is grief. Grief that loved ones have been taken from us, grief that the church is struggling, grief that no matter how hard we try, the snakes seem to just keep on coming.

And let me be clear, we are **not** called to stop grieving. Truly, the scriptures are full of weeping, of wailing, the beating of breasts, and the tearing of hair. When his friend Lazarus died and Mary and Martha were grieving, Jesus, too, wept. And I believe in the fullness of my being that as Jesus himself hung on that cross, that instrument of torture and death, God his mother and father began to weep. Truly, I tell you, acknowledging grief and honoring it is part of our faith. We **are not** called to stop grieving.

But we ARE called to seek healing. I pray, though, that we do not seek healing through **snake oils**. Aha! There are those sneaky snakes again! Those fraudulent remedies of old have simply shed their skins for new ones today, and they are being sold at the apothecaries of bad religion. And these snake oils are not simply harmless concoctions. They are potent poisons in and of themselves! I can think of a few that are especially popular. Christian nationalism, teaching that white and might make right, and so the way to heal is through excluding and harming immigrants. Zionism, teaching that only one group of people is chosen by God, and so the way to heal is through apartheid. The prosperity gospel, teaching that righteousness leads to material wealth, and so the way to heal is through greed and consumption. The church of traditionalism, teaching that we should stick to the status quo, and so the way to heal is through doing the same old things over and over again. The cult of individualism, teaching us to rely on ourselves, and so the way to heal is *without* community. I would even argue that sometimes we bow down too easily to the *Rod of Asclepius*, that other snake-topped staff, teaching that we should pay unjustly absurd amounts of money for insurance and medication. **We are desperate for healing, but we are seeking it in the wrong places.**

Those snake oils will poison our souls and make us forget where true healing comes from. The word "Christ" comes from the Greek word for "anointed one." Anointing is done with oil. Let us turn from those snake oils of bad religion to the anointing oils of the way of the cross! **Let us look up at that staff which is held aloft!** As Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life!" The cross, the ultimate symbol of the venomous violence of empire, was transformed into the altar that would give life to all those being harmed. Think of the power of THAT healing!

It is not simply a matter of looking up and being healed, though. Jesus tells Nicodemus a bit later in their conversation, "Those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God." We ourselves, as the community of God's children at First Presbyterian Church of Highland must not only be healed, but we must *be healers*. We must lift up that staff, that cross, so that others might see! For, God calls us and trusts us to be part of the healing process just like Moses was.

We must be sources of **anointing oil**, for each other, for this community, for all of Creation. And we must stop spreading venom and selling snake oil. Remember the story of the snakes in Iraq? Well, the reason the rivers were drying up was because people were building dams upriver for their own economic growth. Now, dams serve multiple functions. They are wall-like barriers, they create a surplus of resources for some and deplete those of others, and they give power to systems spread far and wide. We need to discern the dams that we have helped to build, the catastrophic results of which might be so far downriver that we can't even see them. We need to explore how we build barriers to exclude, how we practice theologies of scarcity, and how we give power to systems that oppress. Then we need to dismantle those dams and let the waters of life flow! We

must follow the example of that mighty prophetess Miriam and her descendent in the faith Jesus, bringing **living** water wherever we may go.

And we can do it, loved ones! We can be in community. We can practice love in ALL of its fullness. We can pray for each other and for people everywhere. We can topple structures of dominance and injustice. We can tear down physical walls that divide nations and political walls that divide people. We can resist the construction of data centers and detention centers. We can melt down our weapons and forge new tools for cultivation. We can dig wells and plant gardens and build enough housing for all. We can once again make our churches sanctuaries for the least and the last and the lost. For we have been empowered, we have been embraced, and we have been anointed in the ever-flowing, limitless grace of the holy oil that flowed from the cross.

**Friends, hear the good news! The instrument of death was transformed into the source of life. The instrument of death was transformed into the source of life! O death, where is your sting?!** For, not even death could destroy Jesus. He was lifted up on that cross, with the venom of the Roman empire coursing through his veins, showing the whole world that he, too, knows what it is like to be bitten, to suffer, to be afraid, to know loneliness, to grieve, and, at last, to die. But there was another lifting up that would! And it is to this lifting up that we can, that we must look at for healing! For, after three days he was lifted up, and he rose again from the grave! Ah, but I am getting ahead of the story! For now, let me end with some of the best known words ever spoken: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.” Hallelujah and amen!

# In the Cross of Christ I Glory

84

RATHBUN 8.7.8.7

John Bowring, 1825

Ithamar Conkey, 1849



1. In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, Tower-ing o'er the wrecks of time;
2. When the woes of life o'er-take me, Hopes de-ceive, and fears an-noy,
3. When the sun of bliss is beam-ing Light and love up - on my way,
4. Bane and bless-ing, pain and plea-sure, By the cross are sanc - ti - fied;



All the light of sa - cred sto - ry Gath-ers round its head sub-lime.  
Nev - er shall the cross for - sake me: Lo! it glows with peace and joy.  
From the cross the ra - diance stream-ing Adds more lus - ter to the day.  
Peace is there that knows no mea - sure, Joys that through all time a - bide.



## Lift High the Cross

George William Kitchin (1827-1912)  
 Rev. by Michael Robert Newbolt, 1916; alt.  
*Refrain and Descant*

CRUCIFER 10.10 with refrain

Sidney Hugo Nicholson, 1916  
 Desc. Richard Proulx (b. 1937)

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro - claim

Till all the world a - dore His sa - cred name.

Till all the world a - dore His sa - cred name. *Fine*

1. Come, Chris - tians, fol - low where our Sav - ior trod,  
 2. Each new - born ser - vant of the Cru - ci - fied  
 3. O Lord, once lift - ed on the glo - rious tree,  
 4. So shall our song of tri - umph ev - er be:

*Repeat Refrain*

The Lamb vic - to - rious, Christ, the Son of God.  
 Bears on the brow the seal of Christ who died.  
 Your death has brought us life e - ter - nal - ly.  
 Praise to the Cru - ci - fied for vic - to - ry.