

ORDER OF WORSHIP – Sunday, February 21, 2021 – LENT 1B

PRELUDE “As the Deer”

<https://vimeo.com/35189918>

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Happy Birthday Martha Zonneville!



<https://vimeo.com/1658836>

In person worship will continue on the first and second Sunday of March. The hope of the Session is to be able to offer in-building worship every week beginning on Easter Sunday, April 4. Of course, this is subject to change but that is the plan right now! 😊

Information and articles for the March-April edition of the Communique should be to Mary in the church office by Tuesday or Wednesday, February 23 or 24. Earlier is always better than later.

Email Rev. Marie at myhansel@yahoo.com with any joys and concerns you would like to have lifted up in prayer each Sunday. (This invitation is extended to those inside and outside of the church community.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come all who are lost and in pain. God calls to you.

Lord lift us from our fears and sorrows; bring us close to you.

Come all who have lost hope, who feel there is nothing worth living for.

Lord, clear away our blindness that we may see the light of your love.

Come, do not despair. God is calling your name.

We want to be ready for this journey. Help us, Lord. Make us ready to trust you. Amen.

ANTHEM “You Are Mine” by David Haas

<https://vimeo.com/298651940>

OPENING PRAYER

The season of Lent is here again and, as with so many times before, we find that we are not really ready for this journey of discipleship. So many things claim our lives and prevent us from being ready to take the steps in faith. As we look at our barrier of readiness, help us to remember that Christ is with us, every step of the way. We are not alone. Christ will help lift our hearts and spirits and direct our paths. Enable us, loving Savior, to take this journey of faith to new life with you. AMEN.

HYMN “Be Thou My Vision”

<https://vimeo.com/29694484>

**Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art—
Thou my best thought by day or by night, Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.**

**Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word; I ever with Thee and Thou with me Lord;
Thou my great Father and I Thy true son, Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one.**

**Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise, Thou mine inheritance now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart, High King of Heaven, my treasure Thou art.**

**High King of Heaven, my victory won; May I reach Heaven’s joys, O bright Heaven’s sun;
Heart of my own heart whatever befall, Still be my Vision, O Ruler of All.**

CALL TO CONFESSION¹

We come to our 40-day journey of Lent with penitence in our hearts. The polarization, enmity and fissures that have scarred our country are in us as well. We yearn for truth, peace and justice. Yet we know that we have not lived as those who are formed in the truth, peace and justice of Christ. We confess our sin, assured of God’s mercy and empowering grace.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION¹

Merciful God, we confess our complicity in the divisions that have wounded our country and our world. We have turned aside from your way. We have failed to love you and our neighbor, neglected justice and ignored your truth. Forgive us, and restore in us your Spirit of compassion and justice-seeking love.

time for silent confession

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS¹

God in Christ is steadfast love and mercy. So friends, hear the good news of the gospel. In Christ we are forgiven and set free from the sins that bind us and enslave us. We are empowered to love God with all of who we are, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Thanks be to God.

GRATEFUL RESPONSE “Gloria Patri”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION¹

Gracious God, you are our way in the wilderness. Your Word will guide us through these 40 days of Lent so that we may be reformed, restored, and renewed. Amen.

SCRIPTURE – Psalm 25:1-10

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

³Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

⁴Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

⁵Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

⁶Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

⁸Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

SCRIPTURE – Mark 1:9-15

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." ¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

MESSAGE "Tohu Webohu"

"In matters of faith it is first we must do, then we will know; first we will be, and then we will see.

One must, in short, dare to act wholeheartedly without absolute certainty."

-William Sloane Coffin

Lent begins in the wilderness. Jesus' ministry began in the wilderness, a place in the Bible that is always an indication of grave, spiritual danger. In the very beginning, before God created the heavens and the earth, there was only chaos. It was in the original Hebrew, "tohu webohu" – formless, shapeless and dangerous. It took the creative power of God to begin to mold and shape the chaos into a life of order, a place where God's soon to be created creatures could be nourished and flourish.

But throughout the rest of Scripture, wilderness, the same "tohu webohu" of Genesis, came to be known as an indication of the realm of the devil, for temptation, for threats to life and limb, and also to soul.

Lent begins in the wilderness. Jesus' ministry began in the wilderness. John the Baptist's ministry took place in the wilderness where many came out into the wilderness just to be baptized by John – a baptism for the remission of sin – a baptism to prepare them for the one who was to come after him – who would lead them out of the wilderness to the Kingdom of God.

But first, Jesus had to begin in the wilderness.

No sooner is Jesus baptized by John and has received the message that he is God's beloved Son, than he is literally HURLED out into the wilderness (like a bouncer hurling a rowdy bar patron through the window and out onto the sidewalk) – into the wilderness -- a place of danger – to be tempted by the devil – to live with the wild animals – and with angels.

“In Mark, Jesus says not one single word in public, preaches not even two minutes' worth of a sermon, before he is dropped down smack in the middle of a very bad place of chaos. It's almost as though Jesus cannot credibly say or preach anything until this happens. Jesus has to enter the worst of evil on this planet before he can reliably declare that the kingdom of God has drawn near. Maybe that is because the kingdom of God **cannot** draw near until the kingdom of darkness – epitomized by the deep desert of evil – is engaged.” (Scott Hoezee)

I grew up watching M*A*S*H as a pre-teen/teenager. Probably more enthralled with the shenanigans of Hawkeye and BJ than the godly messages of Father Mulcahy. There is one episode in which Father Mulcahy is trying to minister to a wounded soldier who had been severely traumatized by what he had experienced on the front lines of the war. But when the soldier finds out that Mulcahy has never seen any action in war, he wants nothing to do with the good Father. As fate would have it, later in the same episode, Mulcahy does find himself in the midst of battle forced to perform an emergency medical intervention while shells are exploding all around him.

Shaken by the experience, he returns to camp and finds that his wounded soldier is now ready to talk – to share the memories of what he has seen and done – because now Father Mulcahy can really and truly hear what the soldier has to say. Now Mulcahy gets it!

Jesus had to go out into the wilderness. Jesus had to experience the trials and temptations of being human. He had to live in our skin – to engage the evils of this world – in order to come from a place of true power and knowledge – perhaps even to understand how important his mission was – how very much we needed to be saved – how much we, as God's creation, would be able to contribute to the coming of the Kingdom of God if at last we were set free from the evils of this world – set free to from the walls and boundaries that have been constructed around us keeping us from being all that God has given us the capability to be.

Jesus did not succumb to the wilderness. The power of evil did not defeat him, the wild animals did not eat him, and there were angels there who ministered to him.

Mark doesn't give us any details of Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. But Mark tells us that Jesus was there in the midst of the wilderness. And somehow, he came out on the other side ready to begin the work of healing the world – from evil, from sin, from violence and oppression, from physical and mental disease, from greed and complacency.

He didn't do it all on his own. The same Spirit of God that hurled him out into the wilderness provided angels who must have been there to be of some assistance. Perhaps they provided food or kept him safe from the animals while he slept, or sang to him the Psalms of his ancestors, or prayed for him, or conveyed the word of God's promises in scripture to always be near, to always forgive, to never forsake or abandon him.

Jesus had to go out into the wilderness. And you and I, and all of God's people have to go out into the wilderness from time to time. It is part of being alive. It is part of being children of God. Just as Jesus had to experience the depths of what it means to be human, we too have to live in the depths of human experience in order to know, to understand, to really "get it" when we encounter others on their journey through life. Through our wilderness journeys we learn to live from a place of compassion, we are reminded that God will not abandon us either, that there is indeed a light that comes after the darkness and chaos, the "tohu webohu" of life. God is near. God will provide.

Who or what have been the "angels" who have appeared in your life during your wilderness journeys?

What have you learned from your times in the wilderness?

Can you trust that God will provide? That God is near and will not abandon you despite all circumstances that point to the contrary?

How can you be an angel to someone who is in the wilderness right now?

Lent begins in the wilderness, in the worst part of life, in a fallen, broken world. It begins there as a reminder that Jesus is transforming this world by his very presence. Lent begins in the wilderness so that by the time we see Jesus enter into nothing short of hell and death itself near the end of it all, we will have more than a firm sense that somehow, some way—by a grace and power we can scarcely imagine—Jesus will leave those places changed. He'll pass through the hell of death and somehow leave Life in his wake." (Scott Hoezee)

***HYMN “O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright”**

<https://vimeo.com/471820583>

**O splendor of God’s glory bright, from light eternal bringing light,
O Light of light, the fountain spring; O Day, our days illumining.**

**Confirm our will to do the right and keep our hearts from envy’s blight.
Let faith her eager fires renew, and hate the false, and love the true.**

**Teach us to work with all our might; put Satan’s fierce assaults to flight;
Turn all to good that seems most ill; help us our calling to fulfill.**

**All praise to God the Father be, and to the Son eternally;
Whom with the Spirit we adore, forever and forevermore.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE ¹

Holy God, we pray that you would empower us with courage and faithfulness as we embark on this Lenten journey. We seek renewal and restoration during these 40 days. Help us to remember Jesus’ faithfulness in the wilderness, tempted by Satan. Be with us in our temptation. Let your grace follow us and go before us in each step of this journey. Enable us to accept spiritual disciplines for this journey. Let us pray daily and be especially attentive to the needs of others, and to our own needs.

Use this time to raise up your joys and concerns for self and others before God.

God of the nations, we pray for peace with justice throughout the world, so that all your children may dwell secure, free of war and injustice. Move the hearts of leaders throughout the world to hear the cries of the poor and hungry, and to ensure a rightful share of the resources needed to sustain life.

Use this time to raise up your joys and concerns for various situations in our nation and around the world,

And as we continue to grapple with overwhelming pandemic challenges, we pray that you would grant special measures of strength and endurance to healthcare workers and other essential workers who labor on the frontlines of this struggle. And we pray for all who are

now facilitating vaccination and for those who are providing the vaccines. We pray for your comfort for all who are sick and for all who have lost loved ones. Grant us all wisdom and courage for the living of this hour.

Use this time to lift up prayers for essential workers who have made your life easier during this time of pandemic.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying,

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 sins as we forgive those who sin 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.

HYMN "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"

<https://vimeo.com/416886871>

**Breathe on me, Breath of God, Fill me with life anew,
That as you love, so may I love, And do what you would do.**

**Breathe on me Breath of God, Until my heart is pure,
Until my will is one with yours To do and to endure.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God, Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me Glows with your heavenly fire.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God, So shall I never die,
But live with you the perfect life Of your eternity.**

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

The first step on the journey, that of readiness, is one of the hardest. We keep thinking that we have forgotten something. God has called you by name, to this journey. You will have all that you need. Go in peace and know that God is going with you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with you now and abide with you always. Amen.

POSTLUDE Fughetta by J.E. Rembt

<https://vimeo.com/411202044>

¹*Presbyterian Outlook 2021, Liturgy written by Roger Gench and provided for free distribution.*

MORNING PRAYER

God of ancient covenants, your steadfast love and faithfulness are still new every morning. I thank you that I can begin this day in the confidence of your abiding love and unending mercy. Help me to treat others—family, friends, coworkers, classmates, and even strangers—with love and mercy in our encounters today. When I disappoint or am discordant, help me to show love to others. Open my eyes to the places, people, and circumstances in which your kingdom has come near.

I pray in the name of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

Living God, maker of light, thank you for the gift of this night. Let me be at peace in your presence so that I may rest, be restored, and arise to praise your glory; in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.