

Announcements and Prayer Requests

- ✦ **March WestFed Food Pantry needs:** Peanut Butter, jelly, bars of soap.
- ✦ **Flowers are given this week by:**
 - ♥ By Barb and Dale Nieman in memory of Mae and Robert Nieman.
 - ♥ In honor of the March 17 wedding anniversary of Ruth Uffelmann Baumann and Arthur Baumann, from their daughter, Valerie Ruth Baumann.
- ✦ **Open Flower Dates:** July 10 and 31.
- ✦ **Prayers are requested for:**
 - ♥ Eileen Beckman, recovering from a broken hip, and now in hospice.
 - ♥ Wally Pearson in hospice at Twin Towers.
 - ♥ Walt Albers, Linda Gardner's brother, was diagnosed with liver cancer, and will be starting chemotherapy soon.
 - ♥ Kathy O'Connell, Chris O'Connell's aunt, recovering from a recent stroke.
 - ♥ Diane Ringshauser, who is undergoing chemotherapy.
 - ♥ Pierce Teepen, son of Alyssa and Tyler, friends of Rhonda Boddy.
 - ♥ Rev. Larry Lalama, Jeff's cousin, who has been diagnosed with cancer.
 - ♥ Diana Jackson, Rhonda's sister-in-law, undergoing chemotherapy.
 - ♥ Jan Rice and Kristine Von Holle, Sandy Morris' friends.
 - ♥ DJ Hines, Sandy Morris' brother-in-law.
 - ♥ Linda Kugele who continues to deal with breathing issues.
 - ♥ Our homebound members and friends.
 - ♥ Our Scouting units, their families and leaders.
 - ♥ Our Session, our committees, and the discernment team.
 - ♥ Our partnership with City Gospel Mission's Princesses Ballet.



Welcome to our Service of Worship, March 19, 2023

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

Westwood First Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati OH

Gathering Around God's Word

Welcome and Announcements

[Please take a moment to silence all mobile devices and prepare for worship.]

Prelude: "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"—arr. Dale Wood

[* Where indicated (*), those who are able are invited to stand.]

Ring of the Tower Bell

Choral Introit: "I Will Sing Unto the Lord"—John Ness Beck

* **Call to Worship** (Based on Psalm 23—Responsive)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

We gather for worship knowing that God is our shelter, protection, and guide.

We want for nothing, and we will practice thanksgiving!

God invites us to places of peace and beauty where wildflowers bloom and mountain streams flow.

God will restore us, and we will practice sabbath rest.

Even when anxiety and fear threaten to overwhelm us, when depression and despair have us in their hold, and it seems like death would be easier than life,

Even then, we need not fear. We will trust in God and practice patience.

For you, O God, nourish us even when trouble and enemies are all around.

You claim us as your own and call us by name.

Our cup overflows, and we will practice joy!

God's compassion and grace are with us every day,

And we will make our home in God's love, justice and peace.

Opening Prayer (Leader only)

* **Hymn No. 376 (vv. 1, 3-4):** “*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*”

Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation; enter every trembling heart.

Come, Almighty, to deliver, let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never, never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish, then, Thy new creation; true and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee.
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.

Invitation/Prayer of Confession (*Unison*)

God of Mercy, God of Grace we bring our brokenness, our sinfulness, our fears and despair, and lay them at your feet. We hold out hearts and hands, minds and souls to feel your touch, and know the peace that only you can bring.

God of Healing, God of Wholeness, in this precious moment in your presence and power, grant us faith and confidence that here broken lives are made whole. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Moment of Silent, Personal Reflection and Confession

Assurance of Pardon (*1 John 4:9-10—Responsive*)

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” This is the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

May the peace of Christ be with you always!

And also with you.

* **Gloria Patri** (*Unison*)

**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.**

Moment for Meditation: Spiritual Blindness

Jesus talks a lot about eyesight. He heals people born blind and critiques religious leaders for their lack of vision. In fact, in the Gospel of John, Jesus states that he had come into the world “so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” Throughout Jesus’ ministry, spiritual blindness is highlighted as a perpetual problem for the people around him.

Blindness is an inability to see; Spiritual blindness, therefore, is an inability to see the things of the Spirit. Whenever someone is unable to recognize the activity of God, through the work or words of Jesus, they are considered spiritually blind.

Given that spiritual blindness afflicts the faithful, from the Pharisees to the disciples, how might we ensure that we keep ourselves from this condition? How can we break free from spiritual blindness if it occurs in our lives? The answer is relatively simple: we look to Jesus.

Looking to Jesus is the only antidote to spiritual blindness.



The gospels make clear that it is a misdirection of our vision. Spiritual blindness is an internal condition. It occurs when we focus our attention upon our own pride, desire, or limited understanding.

Whenever we believe that we have plumbed the depths of God, we act in spiritual blindness. Such an attitude does not embody the grace of

Jesus. It does not take into consideration that Jesus may do something unexpected in our lives. God’s ways and thoughts are always beyond our own. We always have something to learn, and we can always use more healing in our life.

This is easy to say, and easier to write, but harder to do. Too often, the root of spiritual blindness is pride. This pride keeps us from the necessary disciplines of humility and trust. Yet the call of faith is to believe in the guiding, healing, power of Jesus.

We stubbornly look to him, even in those moments where we can’t understand what Jesus is doing, or where he is taking us. As we intentionally place Jesus at the center of our lives, the Spirit will lead us to deeper experiences of healing and grace.

~ The Reverend Dr. Kyle Norman, *St. Paul’s Cathedral, Kamloops BC, Canada*

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

[During the prayer, everyone will have an opportunity to offer a joy or concern aloud. During the pause, feel free to call out the name of someone for whom prayer is requested, or briefly, a joy or concern on your heart. The prayer concludes with the Lord's Prayer, offered in unison.]

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.

Bearing God's Word Into the World

* **Closing Hymn No. 426 (vv. 1-4):** "Lord, Speak to Me, That I May Speak"

Lord, speak to me that I may speak in living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou hast sought, so let me seek Thine erring children, lost and lone.

Oh, lead me, Lord, that I may lead the wandering and the wavering feet;
Oh, feed me, Lord, that I may feed Thy hungry ones with manna sweet.

Oh, teach me, Lord, that I may teach the precious truths Thou dost impart.
And wing my words that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart.

Oh, fill me with Thy fullness, Lord, until my very heart o'erflow;
In kindling thought and glowing word, Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

Charge and Benediction

Choral Response: "The Peace of God"—Yarrington

Postlude: "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing"—arr. John Innes

Leading Worship This Morning

Rev. Dr. Jeff Colarossi, *Pastor*

Heather MacPhail, *Organist/Director of Music Ministries*

Jason Dennison, *Videographer/Director of Technology*

Marc Baverman, *Lay Leader*

Welcome

Proclaiming God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1, 4-13—David Anointed as King

¹ The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." ⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" ⁵ He said, "Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the Lord." ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these."



¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here." ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14—Sleepers Awake!

⁸ For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, " Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you."

Gospel Reading: John 9:1-41—A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

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: “*Here’s Mud in Your Eyes!*”

Responding to God’s Word

Invitation to Stewardship

Offertory Prayer (*Unison*)

Faithful God, you have kept your promises to us. Our lives give witness to your abundant blessings. Help us to keep our promises to you, by strengthening our commitment to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ. Your love sustains us, guides us, and empowers us. Take our gifts—of time, talent and treasure—as signs of our promise to give ourselves completely into your care: to live without fear; to trust your love without reservation. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Offertory Anthem: “*With A Voice of Singing*”—Martin Shaw
Chancel Choir