

# First Presbyterian Church

19 Seminary Street  
Barre, Vermont

March 19, 2023 10:00 a.m.  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

*We are delighted that you joined us today! We hope you will find us an affirming, uplifting, and committed family of faith. Here we work to make everyone, without any exceptions, to feel accepted, inspired, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. In dialogue, we seek to understand. In encouragement, we seek to heal. In all things we yearn to live by love, for peace, with joy. This is a place where your intellect will be challenged, your heart will be nurtured, and your spirit refreshed. Varying beliefs are expressed openly and freely, and your doubts will not be suppressed. We trust that we are all, every person and part of creation, continuing to be blessed by God's grace; and that in community we can help each other to see this grace alive in our lives and relationships. We hope to share our gifts with you, even as we pray that you will want to share your gifts with us. Whoever you are and wherever you may be in your life's journey, we invite you to be a part of our lives and our spiritual home. Welcome!*

✠ = Please rise in body or spirit as you are able!

## GATHERING

Today's hymns are from the purple Glory to God hymnal, except where otherwise indicated.

### Gathering on Abenaki Lands Acknowledgement

#### Announcements

#### Prelude

#### Welcome

#### ✠ Centering Our Souls

You, O Spirit, walk with us and help to guide our ways.

**Whether we are lost, or think we know where we're going, you lead us to paths of love and kindness, compassion and mercy.**

Remind us of who you are, and therefore who we are, that we may not judge one another by the misgivings we see.

**Make it clear to our understanding in all of our relationships that each one can manifest your good works.**

May we come to see the sight of the blind, the abilities of the disabled, the worth of the despised, and the love of the hated.

**Help us to see your image in all whom we encounter.**

When we are prone to doubt the goodness in the world, open our hearts to the grace of gratitude.

**When we'd rather deny a miracle and affirm cynicism, inspire us to imagine a more wonderful reality than what we have come to expect.**

Motivate us to relish each other's successes, and to encourage one another's efforts.

**In all things, may we seek to show love to all we meet, so that your light will shine through us. May it be so, now and always.**

#### ✠ Hymn for Gaining Sight # 451 "Open My Eyes, That I May See"

1. 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. Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see. Open my eyes; illumine me, Spirit divine!

2. Open my eyes, that I may her voices of truth thou sendest clear. And while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear. Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see. Open my ears; illumine me, Spirit divine!
3. 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. Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see. Open my heart; illumine me, Spirit divine!

### Prayer for Transformation and New Life

*Unison*

**Spirit that gives us new birth: Forgive us for making our Christianity too easy a thing – a faith that is based on “right beliefs” rather than on “fruits of the Spirit.” In this season of Lent, let us not hide our lights from the world, but let them shine upon all humanity and earthly creation. Let us work to make “heaven on earth” a reality for all; never dissuaded by all that threatens its accomplishment. Let us learn how to avoid misdeeds, and how to nurture good deeds, that we may leave the shadows of our past behind as we walk into a future of light and love. May it be so.**

### Words of Forgiveness and Grace

God is compassionate and kind, and wants us all to live lives of virtue. While holding us accountable, God will always forgive out of great love for us. But if we are to feel forgiven, we are to no longer do what warranted forgiveness, else we are reminded again and again. If you would feel that forgiveness, go yourself to forgive, to love, and to make peace: God will be with you.

**May love be our light, and peace be our path as we walk with God.**

### Congregational Response *Tune: Gloria Patri*

Honor to the Creator, who blesses us, and shows us how to bless.

May we ever love each other, and work for peace and justice;

Christ's light in us! May it be, may it be!

### Passing the Peace

*Please help with Covid prevention by waving, making the peace sign, acknowledging with prayer hands, or by other methods of passing the peace that limit contact and maintain distancing.*

## LISTENING

### Scripture Lesson

John 9

### Message

“A Polylogue/Bible Study of Jesus and A Man Born Blind”

### ✠ Hymn for Living as Blessing

“God Is Love! God Is Love!”

### God Is Love! God is Love!

*Tune: Hudson C.M. with refrain*

*Music: Ralph E. Hudson, 1885; Words: Rev. Bret S. Myers, 3/23/2017*

“Who sinned, his parents or himself, that made this man be blind?”

The question asked presumed a God as one who was not kind.

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

The man born blind could not believe this music to his ears!

Could it be true that here was one he’d searched for all these years?

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

God works could be revealed in him, what joy did fill his soul!  
No longer would he be despised, for love had made him whole!

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

Not all believed that one so blind could gain the sight to see.  
Their doubts of goodness in this world did make them disagree.

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

The man once blind was driven out by those who closed their minds.  
Both he and Jesus they did judge because their hearts were blind.

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

Their rules and ideology forbade a Sabbath cure.  
Compassion on a holy day just could not be endured!

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

Should we forgive those blind of heart who hate instead of care?  
Oh yes, of course, but one last thing: Urge them for love to dare!

*Refrain*

“God is love! God is love!” is what Jesus did reply, “Love’s the light that gives the blind eyes to see. When we love, not judge, and with kindness we nudge, our lives become beautiful and free.”

*John 9, which inspired the words to this hymn, tells a story of the encounter of a man born blind with the love he found in Jesus, and the ordeal of trying to convince others of a truth their theology could not accept. Dogma often gets in the way of loving others, and when the man is kicked out of the synagogue for having come to see what others refused to see, Jesus seeks him out and encourages him to be faithful to the truth of love that he has discovered. In a polarized political world, we need to reclaim more than ever that God is not a hateful, spiteful, or vindictive God that takes sides of one people over another, but is a God that loves us all — while prodding us to be faithful to living by the same love God calls us to exemplify in our interactions with those who agree and disagree with us.*

— Rev. Bret S. Myers, 3/23/2017

## RESPONDING

### **Giving of Our Offerings.**

We invite you to place your offering in the basket at the rear of the sanctuary as you leave, or you may give online or by mail. Thank you!

“Generosity arises from gratitude like heat arises from fire. Like fire, gratitude is lovely to see; but when it warms others with generosity, that is when it becomes a true blessing.”

### **Musical Meditation**

## Prayers

*Sharing Our Joys and Concerns, and Acts of Compassion or Kindness*

*Silent Meditation: The Prayers of the People*

*Pastoral Prayer*

*Unison Prayer*     *“Prayer from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer”*

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. May it be so.

## SENDING

### ✠ Hymn for Endurance #807

“When We Must Bear Persistent Pain”

1. When we must bear persistent pain and suffer with no cure in sight, come, Holy Presence, breathe your peace with gifts of warmth and healing light.
2. Support us as we learn new ways to care for bodies newly frail. Help us endure, and live and love. Hear our complaint when patience fails.
3. We thank you for the better days when we may smile to greet the sun, to do your work with clearing mind, and bless your name when day is done.
4. In ease or pain, in life and death, to you our fragile lives belong, and so we trust you in all things You are our hope, our health, our song.

### ✠ Encouragement for the Journey

Go to be a blessing! This is your calling.

Do not worry whether your task is difficult, or your efforts are successful.

Life is serendipitous; so what you may think will or has failed may actually renew a life.

Advocate for justice for those unlike you.

Work for peace with those opposed to you.

Kindness offered and love delivered can transform relationships.

Trust in this! Live by this!

Let God be responsible for the outcome;

just commit yourself to the journey of sacred living.

If you do, you will find that you will have not only been a blessing to others,

but that the synergy of life will have created a blessing for you.

## Postlude

Rev. Bret Myers is preaching today.

Today Katherine Paterson is our worship leader.

Alison Cerutti will be making music today.

*Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE #734910-A.*

*The liturgies for this morning’s worship were written by Rev. Bret S. Myers except where otherwise noted.*

*Biblical quotations are adaptations from the NRSV (unless otherwise noted); using variations of word translations from the original languages, as well as paraphrased non-hierarchical and inclusive language.*

*P.S. Don’t forget to continue your “Random/Intentional Acts of Kindness / Intentional Deeds of Compassion” this week and every week! I’m looking forward to hearing your stories!*

**Prayers** – Each week we pray for a different person or family in our church. This week we invite you to keep Jennifer Milne in your prayers. Gracious God, we give thanks for her and her presence in this congregation. Hold her in the palm of your hand and let her feel your love. Give her the wisdom and strength to do your will and the faith and courage to face whatever challenges may arise.

As part of being the connectional Presbyterian church or other ministry within the Presbytery of Northern New England, each week we ask to keep one of Presbytery's participants in our thoughts and prayers. This week, we pray for the First Presbyterian Church (Old South), Newburyport, MA. and Rev. Laurel Cockrill.

**Announcements:**

**Today's message will be in the form of a polylogue, where all those in attendance and online are asked to ask questions or make comments on the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's gospel, where Jesus encounters a man who was born blind. Polylogues invite us to share our collective wisdom with each other and ask pertinent questions to the text. This allows for more congregational participation, and helps us to get to know one another better as we share our thoughts on the passage. You may wish to read the "Points to Ponder" and the "Nourishment for the Journey" ahead of time, along with any other commentaries or reflections on this story. They will be posted on our Church's Facebook page and website. I look forward to doing this type of interactive message with you for the first time!**

**The rescheduled Session Meeting for March will meet after today's worship service, both in person and on zoom.**

**Our Church Session (Board) & Deacons**

Chris Fuhrmeister, Clerk – Personnel and Worship  
Roxanne Casadonte - Outreach  
Dotty Ricks – Outreach  
Lee Aura Bonamico - Outreach  
Cathy Jamieson – Finance and Faith Development  
Peg Lawson – Worship & Fellowship  
Diane Nichols-Fleming – Finance  
Jim Nichols-Fleming – Outreach and Personnel  
Dan Krymkowski - Worship  
Board of Deacons - Sylvia Mitton, Chairperson

**OUR CHURCH**

You the members and participants!  
Treasurer – Kathy Adams  
Pianist / Organist – Alison Cerutti / Dan Krymkowski  
Administrative Assistant – Cindy Hooker  
Choir Director – Peg Lawson  
Custodian – Jennifer Milne  
Elder of the Month – Dotty Ricks  
Deacon of the Month – Sylvia Mitton & Paulette O'Bryan  
Interim Pastor – Rev. Bret S. Myers

*Please make an appointment with Pastor Bret if you would like to meet with him.  
You may email him at [revbmyers@yahoo.com](mailto:revbmyers@yahoo.com), or call/text his cell at 608-370-9472.*

*Video chatting is also available via Zoom.*

*Office Hours will be established in the coming weeks.*

**To Contact the Church**

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