



SUNDAY WORSHIP

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 14, 2021

9:00am

“I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, that it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love. I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always toward wholeness, which ultimately is reconciliation and atonement with God.”

—Wendell Berry

"For God so loved the world..."—John 3:16a

Prelude

Beneath the Cross of Jesus
arr. Cynthia Dobrinski

Welcome

Call to Worship

Before we were born, before our first breath;
before the week started, the year started;
Before we said, "I love you,"
before we said, "I'm sorry,"
Before we figured out who we really are,
or who we want to be,
Before it all—God loved us.
Unconditionally and freely,
fully and honestly—
God loved us.
Again and again, this is where our story begins.
Let us worship God!

Opening Prayer

God of All Ages and Times, we gather and worship you together,
joining our prayers and voices with your saints of all generations.
Together we celebrate your eternal love and everlasting mercy,
singing your praises for all the world to hear. Thanks be to you, Eternal God! Amen!

Hymn # 418

Softly And Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

Prayer of Confession

God of love, so often we forget the beginning of the story:
That we were made from love, to be love, to give love.
We forget that first there was you, and you are love.
We forget that from the very first day, you loved first.
We forget, because a love like that doesn't make sense to us.
Forgive our resistance to love ourselves and others.
Forgive our hesitation to trust that even we could be made good.
And forgive our tendency to pass that doubt on—from generation to generation.
Write a new beginning for us that roots our confidence in your unrelenting love.
With hope we pray, again and again. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Family of faith, no matter what we do, where we go, or what we tell ourselves,
we know that God is love, and God loves us.
Again and again, we are claimed, held, forgiven, and cared for.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—thanks be to God. Amen!

Response

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Land of Rest

Children's Message

Ministry Updates

Matthew 25 Moment for Ministry

Special Music

First movement from Sonata for Cornet and Piano in E-flat Major
Thorvald Hansen

Prayers of the People

**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.**

Giving and Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

O Lord, Have Mercy
Marc Willerton

Hymn # 215

What Wondrous Love Is This

Prayer for Illumination

God of the here and now, we have heard the words, "For God so loved the world" time and time again. We have read them on billboards and bumper stickers, heard them in worship and Sunday School. And yet we know that there is a difference between hearing those words in passing and truly, deeply listening. We long to listen, God. We long to hear your truth. We long to know your love. Open our hearts and minds. We are listening. Amen.

Scripture Reading

John 3:14-21

*The forgiveness of God has come to God's people in significant events in history:
just as Moses revealed it in the wilderness, the Son of God would be lifted up to embody God's love
in a new and personal way.*

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 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. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But 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.

Sermon

"Salvation, Works, and Lent"

Bob Sheldon

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe God is love:
Unconditional, constant love.
We believe this love exists for all,
choosing each and every one of us,
day after day,
again and again and again.
We believe that God's love is like a river;
rivers cannot help but flow toward the sea;
God's love cannot help but move toward us.
We believe that God loved first.
We believe that God breathed life into dust.
We believe that God said, "This is good."
And because we believe that God loved first,
we strive to build lives that reflect God's love.
May we begin again here. Amen.**

Hymn # 182

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Lenten Charge & Blessing

As you leave this space,
May your mouth speak of God's goodness.
May your arms hold those in need.
May your feet walk toward justice.
May your heart trust its worth.
May your soul dance in God's grace.
And may this be your rhythm—
Again and again and again,
Until God's promised day.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself,
Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace.
Amen.

Postlude

C Minor Fugue
Johann Sebastian Bach

FIRST PRES...

Leading us in worship today are Rev. Bob Sheldon, Interim Pastor; Rev. Caroline Cupp, Executive Pastor; Sandor Kadar, Director of Music; Kira Boros, Choir Accompanist, Reid Simmons, organ scholar; Madison Smith, trumpet; The Chancel Ringers.

This service was adapted from a liturgy written by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

About Today's Service. What is the source of our hope? On the Fourth Sunday of Lent we examine what is—and is not—the place where we can place our faith. We come to church to worship—not to explain God, but to gaze upon a deep mystery and to experience the wonder.

In Memoriam: Herbert O. Sperry, member of First Presbyterian Church from December 16, 2001 to March 5, 2021; Penny J. McIlmoyle, member of First Presbyterian Church from February 21, 1971 to March 2, 2021.

Our sympathy and prayers are with Chris, Cynthia and Carolyn Menan and family in the death of Cynthia's father and Carolyn's grandfather; with Heather Bushover and family in the death of her grandfather; and with Gary McIlmoyle and Pamela Stathopoulos and families in the death of their mother, Penny McIlmoyle.

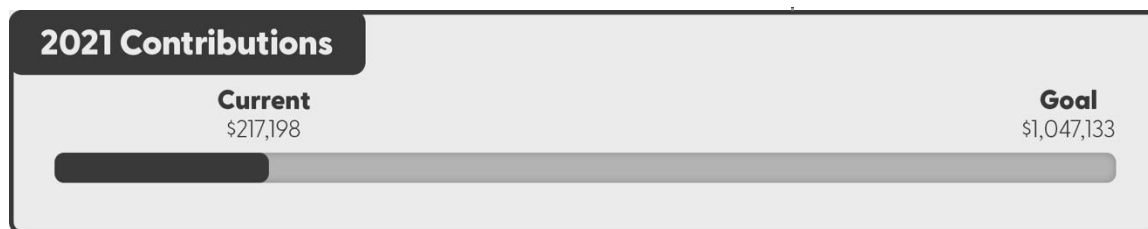
We are happy to announce the birth of Quinn Kaia Dickey, daughter of James and Thanh Dickey, granddaughter of Ann and David Dickey.

New Members Class - We'll be having a New Members Class over Zoom next Sunday, March 21 at 11:30 a.m. If you or someone you know would like to find out more about becoming a member of First Pres, please sign up with Elizabeth Hess (ehess@firstpreswc.com). All are welcome!

Easter Flowers – Because we will be worshipping outdoors this year, we are shifting our tradition around Easter lilies. Rather than dedicating a flower, we are inviting people to give \$12 (the cost of a lily) to the Matthew 25 fund in honor or memory of a loved one. You can either make your gift online at www.firstpreswc.com/easterflowers, email your request to Karen Goldstein (kgoldstein@firstpreswc.com) or mail to the church office with a gift of \$12 by March 28. Please put your name, as well as the name of your loved ones, and whether it is in memory or in honor. Thank you from the Worship Committee!

The March Anti-Racism Conversation will take place next Sunday, March 21 from noon – 1 pm on Zoom. The conversation this month will focus on the intersection of race and housing inequality. We will hear from some local voices to help us understand how this is evidenced in our own community and how the church's Matthew 25 Campaign is seeking to respond. All church members and friends are invited welcome to attend. Contact Sara Pantazes with any questions at spantazes@firstpreswc.com.

Family Hike – First Pres families are invited to gather at Okehocking Preserve on Saturday, March 27 at 10 a.m. for a hilly hike! Bring your kids, dogs, water bottles and masks, and we'll enjoy some early spring beauty together. We may need to make a last-minute change depending on weather, so please let Sara Pantazes know if you plan to attend.



The above graph shows the giving amount as of 3/10/2021 compared to the full year goals for contributions so far. This chart will be presented each week to keep the congregation well-informed of our progress. Further details can be found on the Financial Reporting page on our website.