Westminster
Presbyterian Church

March 7, 2021
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
COMMUNION SUNDAY



Gathering Song *Vessels* CHUCK BELL

Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.

Opening Prayer of Confession **Rachel and Eric Weiss**

Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels,
and that the health of our minds deeply affects our physical and spiritual health.

Let us pray:

Centering and Calming Divine Breath of God,
You gifted us with amazing minds, capable of so many things.
You gave us the ability to think and feel,
imbuing us with discernment of thought and emotion.
But like we do with our physical bodies,
sometimes we neglect this aspect of our selves.

We struggle under the strain of disappointment, despair, and delusion.
Too often we hide this,
afraid of what others might think of our difficulties in managing or moving forward,
even in the face of devastating circumstances.
Too often we perpetuate the stigma of a less-than-perfect state of mind
by shaming ourselves and others.
We label and belittle, all the while turning the hatred upon ourselves,
for no one is immune from troubles of the mind at some point.

So many are suffering now, God,
weary and distraught, grieving and at the end of their rope.
We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away,
sometimes even from the need in our own community.

Help us, Healer.
Show us our capacity for compassion.
Forgive our inattention.
Move us to move
one step at a time toward greater care for one another.

In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

Silence

Musical Response *Vessels* CHUCK BELL

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Assurance of Forgiveness **Rachel and Eric Weiss**

I invite you to imagine and search for a warmth at the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. This warm orb of light is deep within you, although sometimes it feels dulled, even cold. If it feels this way now, allow this. Do not judge yourself. Perhaps you DO feel this warmth, and all feels right with the world. This just is. You likely will not always feel that way.
Whether or not you feel the warmth of peace and assurance right now, this does not make you right or wrong, good or bad. It just makes you human. And you are not alone. Perhaps you can imagine the warmth coming from someone whose presence fills you with comfort. See it radiate from them to you, as it does when you need it most.

Know this: You are accepted.
No. Matter. What.
Accepting the truth of our difficulties is part of the journey of recovery.
Sharing our stories of difficulty can open the way for healing.
For you, for me, for all.

Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you…
and breathe out with the relief of assurance. Amen.

Opening Hymn No. 819 Be Still, My Soul FINLANDIA

Prayer of Illumination **Dr. Enikő Ferenczy**

Scripture Reading Matthew 9:27-33 **Dr. Enikő Ferenczy**

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows of this." But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district. After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel."

Reflection **Stories** **Mark Woods**

Hymn No. 526 Let Us Tongues and Talents Employ LINSTEAD

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving **Dr. Enikő Ferenczy**

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Holy and Gracious God.

In the beginning you breathed life into raw materials,
creating and animating containers of beauty and goodness.
We, your Holy Vessels, were fired in the kiln of love
until we shined with your light.
Susceptible to shattering, we find ourselves broken,
unable at times to remember your promise of repair.
You remind us time and again that, though broken,
we are held in your presence
and made whole by your grace.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ,
Holy Vessel of Divine Presence on earth.
Your Spirit anointed him as a container of grace in the form of
preaching good news to the poor,
proclaiming release to the captives
recovering of sight to the blind,
setting at liberty those who are oppressed,
and announcing that the time had come
when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry,
and ate with those considered too broken for company.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to the path of healing and recovery,
delivered us from our despair and isolation,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.
In the power of your Word and Holy Spirit,
we are not alone.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and cup.
Make them be for us your Healing Spirit through Christ,
so that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
healing agents in a broken world,
offering the lifeblood of hope.

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 are yours, Healing God,
now and forever.

We pray in the name of the One who is to come, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray together:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn No. 792 There is a Balm in Gilead BALM IN GILEAD

Benediction **Dr. Enikő Ferenczy**

Postlude *Vessels* CHUCK BELL

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*Note: The Opening Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness, and Great Prayer of Thanksgiving were adapted from the *Holy Vessels* by Marcia McFee.

The reflection for Week 3 of our *Holy Vessels* series focusing on mental healing is offered by ***Mark Woods, Executive Director of ANAZAO***, a non-profit organization providing treatment, intervention and prevention services to meet the behavioral health needs of our community in Wayne County. https://anazaocommunitypartners.org.

The song *Vessels* is led by Ken Shafer, piano, and Pong Thiemmedh, tenor.