

**\*Call to Worship**

One: Scripture is full of questions...

**Many: Where are you?**

One: Am I my brother’s keeper?

**Many: Whom shall I send?**

One: Who do you say that I am?

**Many: Who sinned?**

One: How many times shall I forgive?

**Many: If God is for us, who can be against us?**

One: Scripture is full of questions, so just like those in our scriptures, may we bring our full curiosity and wonder into this space.

**Many: Let us ask and seek after our merciful God.**

**\*Hymn #97 (Sing!)** *To the Wilderness*

**Prayer of Invocation**

**Prayer of Yearning** (*unison*)

God of surprises, we know that we do not often perceive the world as you do. We look to the flashy fame, the grand gestures, optimal achievements, and unreachable standards. Yet, in spite of our misguided reach towards perfection, you give us glimpses of your grandeur and grace. Surprise us yet again this day, O God, that in our complacency which allows us to drift towards the same old ways of faith that we may be transformed anew. Provide us with a new cup of oil that we may be anointed by your love so that we may set out into your world to bless and anoint others. In the name of the One whose love and peace make all things new we pray. Amen.

**Words of Assurance**

**Hymn of Praise #276** *Great is Thy Faithfulness* (refrain only)

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed thy hand hath provided;  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!*

**Choir Anthem**

*Come to Me, You Weary*

Mock/Stevens

**A Moment for Our Blessed Community**

**Scripture**

**John 9:1-41**

**Sermon**

Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?

**Hymn**

*We Come with Questions* (Tune – *Lobe Den Herren* #482)

We come with questions assuming that there will be answers  
Setting the world in an order that obeys our grammar  
We want to know where Spirit’s river will flow  
Frustrated by her meanders

Here is the mystery we claim as the followers of Jesus:  
Christ has died, Christ is raised, Christ daily comes to redeem us  
Grace free, not earned, whether or not we deserve  
God works beyond rules and boundaries

God help us live into mystery beyond comprehension  
Quiet our minds always clamoring for some direction  
Give us your peace with all that we can’t perceive  
Holding us within the tension

**Prayers of the People**

**Our Lord's Prayer** (*unison*)

**Sung Response**

*Spirit of Life*

Carolyn McDade

*Spirit of Life come unto me. Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion,  
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea; move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.  
Roots hold me close; wings set me free: Spirit of life, come to me, come to me.*

**Offertory**

**\*Doxology**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below,  
Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

**\*Blessing Our Offerings**

**\*Hymn #284**

*Open My Eyes*

**Our Commission** (*unison*)

*Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage,  
hold fast to that which is good, render to no one evil for evil,  
strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak,  
help the afflicted, honor all people, love and serve the Lord,  
caring for God’s earth and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Benediction**

\*Please rise in body and/or spirit.

**EVENTS**

- ✝ We humbly ask you to sign up to provide plants for worship during Lent, when you are able.
- ✝ Lorna is still looking for **hygiene kit items**: face cloths, hand towels, bath-size bar soap, and toothbrushes. If you prefer to give her the \$ she will do the shopping.
- ✝ Some school kit bags already cut and ready to sew are outside the church office.
- ✝ **Open Door Deadline** is second Sunday of each month.
- ✝ **Sunday Supper today at 4:30 pm.**



Welcome to Second Congregational Church! We are an Open and Affirming, Green Justice Congregation of the United Church of Christ. We welcome to our worship and to our membership all people of faith, or in search of faith, without regard to age, race, gender, economic condition, ability, sexual identity, gender identity, or citizenship; and we affirm all persons beloved children of God. We invite all to share in the worship, full life, leadership, and employment opportunities of the church.

Prayer of Yearning posted on *UCC Worship Ways*, [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) written by Rev. Dr. Chad Abbott  
Other liturgical prayers adapted from prayers by *Rev. Sarah Speed* / A Sanctified Art LLC/ [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).  
Intercessory Prayer written by Rev Karla, and posted on **RevGalBlogPals**. <https://revgalblogpals.org/>

**SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, U.C.C.  
BENNINGTON, VERMONT**

Sunday March 19, 2023  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

Rev. D. Mark Blank, Pastor  
Bonnie Holden, Liturgist

Matt Edwards, Music Director



*Plant provided by*

**Welcome and Introductions**

One:           Whoever you are, or wherever you are on life’s journey,  
All:            **You are welcome here!**

**Prelude**

**Blessing the Child in All of Us**