

THE
Federated Church
OF SYCAMORE



everything
[in] between

Meeting God in the midst of extremes

Lent 2025

Responding to God's Invitation: Prayer Stations

Lent is an invitation to journey through the things we tend to avoid—our doubts, fears, griefs, wounds, and even death. This Lent, though, we are inviting you to hold the “both/and” of life—for even amidst our doubts, we do believe in something; in the face of fear, we experience courage; our wounds can make way for connection; and even death can be the seedbed for new life. Let's meet God here, in the midst of life's polarities.

During this time (~10 min), we invite you to freely participate in the virtual prayer stations. Materials can be found at the back of the bulletin. They are designed to invite you to be present to the tug of the extremes that you are facing within yourself and in our world.

Take your time. Consider this a mini pilgrimage of the soul. This works best if you don't try to visit every station each week; linger where your heart feels called and receive what you need for today as we journey through the fullness that is life.

Waiting in the Wilderness: Some seasons of life feel like wilderness wandering. Even here, God is present. We, too, are invited to be present—even here. *Meditate on the poem included in the bulletin. Notice what arises within you.*

Prayer Candles: *Light a candle and offer a prayer for a loved one or a people / place around the world who are weary, war-torn, grieving, or suffering.*

Naming our Brokenness & Wholeness: To heal what's broken, we must face what's broken. And yet, wholeness can also be present even amidst brokenness. *Add a word, image, or phrase to the comments to help us recognize what brokenness and wholeness look and feel like.*

Table of Offering: *Make your donation to support our growing ministries or our Love Offering through [this link](#).*

Practices for Living in the Messy Middle: In Lent, we intentionally focus on practices that help us live more fully amidst the mess, brokenness, and uncertainty, trusting that as we do, healing, hope, and new life *will* emerge—even here. Use these resources to commit to a spiritual practice during Lent: do it by yourself, with a friend, or as a family

If you are able to worship with us some Sunday in Lent, this additional prayer station is available:

Divine Seeing: *Pause to look more deeply at the artwork inspired by today's scripture.*

Prayer Flags: Prayer flags are cloth hung with simple prayers on them. Just as a drop of water can permeate the ocean, prayers carried on the wind extend to fill all of creation. *Take a ribbon and write a word responding to each week's new prompt.*

Naming our Joys: It's much easier to focus on the “bad stuff” than to notice all that is life-giving. But faith calls us to name both. *Take a flower, think of someone/thing that brings you joy, and float it in the water as a reminder of goodness even here & now*

Order of Worship | March 09, 2025, 10:00 am

All music can be found at the back of the bulletin.

Prelude "Create in Me a Clean Heart" arr. Mark Hayes

Gathering For Worship

Welcome

Passing the Peace We invite you to like the video and/or say "Hi!" in the comments to let us know you're here.

Gathering Song "Bless Now, O God, the Journey" (p.2)

Centering Our Hearts

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

Our Father/Mother/Parent who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kin(g)dom come, your 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Song of Illumination "O God, You Give Us Neighbors" vv. 1-3 (p.3)

Scripture [Luke 9:51-62, 10:25-37](#)

Sermon "Intention and Action; Stranger and Neighbor"

Sung Response "O God, You Give Us Neighbors" vv. 4-5 (p.3)

Responding to God's Invitation: Prayer Stations (see inside bulletin cover)

Preparing to Live God's Love

Our Shared Life

Sending Song "I Saw a Stranger" (p.4)

Benediction

Postlude "The Battle Belongs to the Lord" J. Owens-Collins/arr. M. Hayes
Thank you for joining us for worship today!

† † †

WORSHIP NOTES

Serving us this morning are:

Pastor: Rev. Eric J. Ogi | **Ministers:** All of us! | **Music Director:** Gary Mattin
Children's Church Director: Bill O'Hagan | **Childcare Support:** Janis Schnurr-Trebe
Liturgist: | **Ushers:** Gip Seaver, Ruth Olle, and Skip Schramer
Ushers for Sunday, March 16: Pam & Nate Kitterman, Linda Mason, and Allison Stahl

All hymns this morning are used with permission: *CCLI License #3234671*

"Bless Now, O God, the Journey" by Sylvia G Dunstan

1 Bless now, O God, the jour - ney that all your peo - ple make,
2 Bless so - journ - ers and pil - grims who share this wind - ing way;
3 Di - vine e - ter - nal lov - er, you meet us on the road.

the path through noise and si - lence, the way of give and take.
your hope burns through the ter - rors, your love sus - tains the day.
We wait for lands of prom - ise where milk and hon - ey flow,

The trail is found in des - ert and winds the moun - tain round,
We yearn for ho - ly free - dom while of - ten we are bound;
but wait - ing not for plac - es, you meet us all a - round.

then leads be - side still wa - ters, the road where faith is found.
to - geth - er we are seek - ing the road where faith is found.
Our cov - e - nant is writ - ten on roads, as faith is found.

“O God, You Give Us Neighbors” by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette



1. O God, you give us neigh - bors for whom your love a - bounds.
2. O God, you give us neigh - bors in this world that div - ides.
3. O God, you give us neigh - bors and call us all to see
4. O God, you give us neigh - bors; and now, what must we do?
5. God, may we work for jus - tice for those who live in fear;



They've come here seek - ing ref - uge; they work here in our towns.
We see them at the bor - der; they're strug - gling for their lives.
our com - mon fears and long - ings, our shared hu - ma - ni - ty.
This ques - tion asked of Je - sus is one we ask a - new.
may we show Christ's com - pas - sion, and pray and per - se - vere—



Their child - ren go to school here; they come to church and pray.
They're hurt - ing by the road - side, and by the riv - er, too.
You call us all to lis - ten to bur - dens they have known,
May we not make ex - cu - ses and choose to walk on by
and by your Ho - ly Spi - rit, in all we do and say,



O Lord, we grieve when neigh - bors are be - ing sent a - way.
You call us to show mer - cy to neigh - bors loved by you.
to hear the truth they tell us, to see the love they've shown.
these neigh - bors flee - ing vio - lence— some sent back now to die.
may we stand up for neigh - bors now be - ing sent a - way.

"I Saw a Stranger" by Anna Strickland



I saw a stran - ger on the road in need of help and
I laid there des - perate by the road in need of help and
In our em - brace the mem - o - ry re - turned from E - den's
care No clues to their i - den - ti - ty, just
care As one by one they passed me by, too
dust Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, my
hu - man flesh laid bare A thought had flut - tered
bu - sy or too scared Then one ap - proached and
kin whom I can trust The ar - ti - fi - cial
through my mind: "Is this one of my own?" My tri - bal mind
my first thought was "Do they mean me harm?" To my sur - prise
walls we build a - round the tribes we claim Make us for - get
made me for - get that they're bone of my bone
they met my eyes and held me in their arms
the gos - pel truth: "Be - lo - ved" is your name

ANNOUNCEMENTS

March Love Offering | *One Great Hour of Sharing*

This UCC special mission offering helps support disaster relief, refugee resettlement, and development initiatives around the world. Pick up an OGHS flyer & offering envelope at the Table Offering Prayer Station. Please note "OGHS" on your check.



Waiting in the Wilderness

“Both, Please”

It's one thing to speak of love. It's another
to hold a newborn in your arms,
to sing someone to sleep,
to lean down and listen for their breathing.

It's one thing to speak of faith. It's another
to press your forehead to the floor,
to cry out in prayer,
to ask the hard questions and still
thank God for the meal.

It's one thing to speak of the Divine. It's another
to walk under a tunnel of wisteria,
to stand barefoot at the edge of the sea,
to hear the birds sing as the sun returns
and whisper, *Thank you, thank you, thank you.*

It's one thing and another, so I pray,
Give me both, please. Show me both, please.

by Rev. Sarah Speed

“Never Met a Stranger”

When we talk about God, we say
she’s never met a stranger.
She makes friends at the airport.
She waves to babies in the check-out line.

When we talk about God, we say
she’ll leave the porch light on.
She’ll have warm bread in the oven.
She’ll have all the time in the world.

When we talk about God, we say
she’ll look you in the eye.
She’ll love you as you are.
She’ll call you by your name.

When we talk about God,
we never have to talk about
which side of the road she might walk down.
Wherever you are,
that’s where she’ll be.

by Rev. Sarah Speed

As you ponder this week’s polarities—*intention & action* and *stranger & neighbor*—consider where you would place yourself. Do you feel more strongly aligned to one end or the other, or more in the middle? Consider how your location on the spectrum reflects where you are in your faith journey. Is your current location different from previous seasons of life? Is God calling you to move in a particular direction now? Take this insert home with you and offer a prayer asking God to grant you what you need as you journey ahead.

intention ----- action
stranger ----- neighbor

OUR FEDERATED VALUES

We believe in God

At the center of our faith is the surprising, unsettling, and deeply personal God found in the Bible, most profoundly revealed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. At Federated, our primary interest is not merely talking *about* God, but in *encountering* the Mysterious Force at the heart of the universe. This is a God who comforts us where we need to be comforted and challenges us where we've become complacent. This is a God who will not be confined to dogmatic teachings, nor even to the Bible. We believe that we are invited to encounter this God everywhere: in nature, science, one another, and in other religious traditions as well.

We believe each person is on a unique spiritual journey

We value faith as a journey rather than a destination. We recognize that each person is at a different place on their journey, so we focus on “testimonies” of faith rather than “tests” of faith; stories of how we are being transformed, rather than dogmas we must affirm. Here, you are welcome to belong, question, explore, and lead whether you grew up in church and loved it, or you've had a painful relationship with Christianity; you are welcome whether you feel your faith is unshakeable or you're not sure if you believe in God at all. You are welcome to join a community of people "on the way": encouraging and caring for one another, learning and growing together, and serving alongside each other as we build, in some small way, the world we believe God dreams of.

We believe in building authentic community across our differences

We are an "Open and Affirming" congregation, which is our way of saying that we value diversity. In a time of deep division, we believe it is paramount to gather people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and identities in order to build authentic relationships and community. We believe that the simple but courageous work of showing up and being together in this way is one necessary element in healing our nation and world's deep divisions.

We believe in working for peace through justice

In this congregation, conversations regarding racism, sexism, poverty, war, immigration, homophobia, hunger, abuse, and a host of other issues are commonplace, both from the pulpit and around the table. We know that the Realm of God is not being experienced on earth so long as people are being hurt. With Martin Luther King Jr., we believe that we are all "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny," and that "none of us can be free until all are free." Which means that, as a community, we have a God-given responsibility and mission to work for justice and healing in our neighborhood and beyond. Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). This work is defined not merely by what we are against, but the vision we are for—flourishing for *all!*

“Welcoming Any, Loving All”

*The Federated Church is affiliated with two national denominations:
the United Church of Christ & the Unitarian Universalist Association*



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Facebook & Instagram:
@FederatedChurchSycamore



www.fedsycamore.org

Church Office Phone: (815) 895-2706 || **Email:** Office@fedsycamore.org

Pastor Eric Cell: (815) 797-2250 || **Email** RevEric@fedsycamore.org

Director of Children’s Church: Bill O’Hagan

Childcare Support: Janis Schnurr-Trebe

Federated Church Preschool, Director Bobbi Clough

Phone: (815) 764-9473 || **Email:** Preschool@fedsycamore.org

Address: 612 W. State Street, Sycamore, IL 60178