

THE
Federated Church
OF SYCAMORE



everything
[in] between

Meeting God in the midst of extremes

Lent 2025

Responding to God's Invitation

Prayer Stations at home for online worshippers

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), people in the sanctuary will be visiting various prayer stations. While we can't re-create that experience for you at home, here are some ways you can use this time to create sacred space and connection for yourself wherever you are!

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 (p. 6 in the bulletin). This will be a new poem each week. As you read, notice what word jumps out at you; what feeling(s) arise(s) in you.

When you finish, take a few slow deep breaths and read the poem again. This time, listen for how these words are calling you to action. Reflect on the prompt beneath the poem.

Divine Seeing: *Pause to look more deeply at the artwork (on p. 8) inspired by today's scripture. As you do, ponder the questions and Artist's Statement (p. 9) beneath it.*

Prayer Candles: Lighting candles as one prays for a loved one or a people / place around the world who are weary, war-torn, grieving, or suffering is an ancient spiritual practice. *Find a candle, bring it into your space with you and, as you light it, offer any prayers for yourself, loved ones, or people around the world.*

Table of Offering: We are grateful to continue expanding our accessibility online, growing our intergenerational community in person, and offering a bold witness of love and justice in the wider world. As a small church/nonprofit, none of this is possible without many donations, large and small. Your donations to the “general fund” will especially help us enhance our growing children's ministries and accessibility for young families. *If our worship or ministries have blessed you, we invite you to consider making a donation to support them or our Love Offering partner 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. [Click here](#) for an e-reader version of our Lenten devotional filled with poetry, art, question prompts, and short essay reflections. Commit to using this devotional as a spiritual practice during Lent. Use the question prompts to deepen conversation with a partner, friend, or (grand)child!

Order of Worship | March 16, 2025, 10:00 am

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

Prelude "More Precious than Silver" Lynn DeShazo/ 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 "Be Now My Vision" vv. 1-3 (p. 4)

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 "Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant" vv. 1-2 (p. 2)

Scripture [Luke 10:38-42](#)

Sermon "Faith & Works"

Sung Response "Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant" vv. 3-4, 6 (p. 2)

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

Preparing to Live God's Love

Our Shared Life

Sending Song "We Are Part of Christ's Own Body" (p. 5)

Benediction

Postlude "Blessed Assurance" Phoebe Knapp/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:** Pam & Nate Kitterman, Linda Mason, and Allison Stahl
Ushers for Sunday, March 23: Paula von Ende, and Bev & Skip Schramer

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"Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant?" *by Richard Gillard*



1 & 6 Won't you let me be your ser - vant, let me be as Christ to you?
2 We are pil - grims on a jour - ney, we are trav - elers on the road;
3 I will hold the Christ-light for you in the shad - ow of your fear;
4 I will weep when you are weep - ing; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.



Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my ser - vant, too.
We are here to help each oth - er go the mile and bear the load.
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.
I will share your joy and sor - row till we've seen this jour - ney through.

(repeat stanza 1)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Inter-generational All-Church Lenten Retreat | *Sat. 3/29, 10AM-2PM*

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for this **inter-generational Lenten retreat** filled with meaningful small group conversation, time for silent reflection or spiritual practices, and making art. Some parts will include children and adults working together in the same space, and some will be separate. **Lunch will be provided.** Suggested donation is \$5/person. We look forward to making this journey together! Sign-up in Dutton Hall or in upcoming eNewsletters.

March Love Offering | *One Great Hour of Sharing*

“Be the Light” Give to the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. Your donation helps with food insecurity, disaster relief, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery. Now more than ever the world needs our help.

See the link in the **Table of Offering Prayer Station** to donate the Love Offering.

Help Needed for Maundy Thurs. Meal Planning | *Sun. 3/23, after worship*

The Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service, a sacred story of Jesus’ final hours, will be on Thursday, April 17. We will begin with a Middle Eastern meal in Dutton Hall and move to the sanctuary for the service.

Volunteers are needed to help with decorations, food preparation, serving, and clean-up. If you would like to help, there will be a planning meeting on March 23 in the Youth Room after church. Questions? Check with Paula von Ende.

Soup Sunday | *Sunday, March 30, following worship*

We will NOT have our usual coffee hour after church services on March 30. Instead we will have a light lunch of homemade soups with bread/crackers served after church. This gives us a chance to sit and chat while enjoying some delicious food made by our own in-house chefs. This annual event is something we all look forward to no matter the weather outside. Hope to see you there.

Easter Flower Orders | *Order through Sunday, April 6*

A limited number of Easter plants have been reserved through Glidden Florists. Orders are now being taken for tulips (5), daffodils (5), and hyacinths (5) to decorate the Easter altar. All plants are \$14 and you may take them home after the Easter service. Sign-up for flowers at the eNews link, below.

Maundy Thursday Dinner & Service | *Thursday, April 17, 5:30-7:30 PM*

we will once again be gathering during Holy Week for a Maundy Thursday service. We will begin with dinner at 5:30pm in Dutton Hall. After eating, we will shift into our service, beginning around the Table with song, scripture, and foot washing, before moving into the sanctuary where we will conclude the service.

We are still finalizing details, but we hope this will be an intergenerational gathering--with children joining for dinner and foot washing; when the adults transition to the sanctuary to the "more intense" part of the service, the children would go off to the Chapel to engage the rest of the Maundy Thursday / Good Friday story in a developmentally appropriate way. *Signup to come!*

Meals On Wheels Sign-Up

As we eagerly await the coming of Spring, it is time to start thinking about signing up to deliver Meals on Wheels in April. Sign-up sheets are in Dutton Hall for both Sycamore East and West routes. Please include your name and phone number as you sign-up. If there are any questions see Sharon Hollister.

Weekly eNews

Scan this QR code with your phone camera to see the most recent eNews with all these announcements and more! Subscribe tab is at the top.



“Be Now My Vision” by Mary E. Byrne

Unison

1 Be now my vi - sion, O God of my heart;
2 Be now my wis - dom, and be my true word;
3 Rich - es I need not, nor life's emp - ty praise,
4 Sov - ereign of heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,

noth - ing sur - pass - es the love you im - part—
ev - er with - in me, my soul is as - sured;
you, my in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways;
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav - en's Sun!

You my best thought, by day or by night,
Moth - er and Fa - ther, you are both to me,
You and you on - ly are first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

wak - ing or sleep - ing, your pres - ence my light.
now and for - ev - er your child I will be.
great God, my trea - sure, may we nev - er part.
still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

"We Are Part of Christ's Own Body" by David D. Bjorlin



1. We are part of Christ's own bod - y
2. But when dif - f'rence is ex - clud - ed—
3. We are part of Christ's own bod - y,



work - ing toward a sin - gle goal, each of us es -
age, a - bil - i - ty, or race— our mo - sa - ics
each u - nique in gift and call, yet a - like in



sen - tial mem - bers in the beaut - y of the whole.
turn to mir - rors that re - flect a sin - gle face.
com - mon mis - sion for the flour - ish - ing of all.



As we need each var - ied fea - ture for the bod - y
So we wid - en deep di - vi - sions we were called to
Give us faith, O God of wel - come, not to fear what



to sur - vive so the church must cher - ish
bridge and heal, and we miss the truth and
you em - brace, but to cel - e - brate each



dif - f'rence for our work to grow and thrive.
wis - dom on - ly dif - f'rence can re - veal.
dif - f'rence as an im - age of your grace.



Waiting in the Wilderness

“Wildfire”

I can picture it—salty sweat, accumulating in her bangs. The scent of toasted sesame seeds, crushed oregano, sumac, and cumin. Flour on her hands, painting streaks of white in her hair when she ties it back. The sweet date she samples—the way it stretches and clings to the back of her teeth, leaving the taste of honey in her mouth.

I can picture Martha in that kitchen, plating meals, eager to see their eyes close. Their heads nod. To hear the swell of approval that rises from their lips. And I can picture her sister. Brows scrunched. Fingers fidgeting, wishing for a pen, for paper, for a way to write it down. I can see her mouth part like a fish in the air, questions forming and reforming on her curious lips. I can see her lean in, knees tucked, eyes bright. I can see her imagining the world he dreamed of.

And I can picture how, for generations, this story of two brazen women in scripture, a story of two women so close to Jesus, may have felt like an untamed wildfire. I can picture the way we put these women in boxes.

(continued on other side...)

I can imagine how people saw their full hearts, their untamed energy, and decided to label that as good and bad, better and worse. I can imagine how Martha's questions were interpreted as nagging, or the interruption interpreted as needy.

I can picture how it happened, but what if it was all more beautiful than that? What if these sisters discovered a ministry of cooking? What if they discovered the faithfulness of learning, the kind of friendship that allows you to ask questions, or something in between?

I can imagine it. Can you?

by Rev. Sarah Speed

Where am I on the spectrum?

As you ponder this week's polarities—*faith & action*—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.

faith ----- works





Mary & Martha

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Luke 10:38-42

Digital painting

Growing up, I felt I had to decide whether I was a Mary or a Martha. I never identified with Martha because the culturally-prescribed roles of a woman were my weakness, and I didn't identify with Mary either because she seemed more earnest than I felt.

Diving into the Greek of this text helped me work through my very well-worn opinions to find some nuance. Martha's work was not limited to cooking and cleaning; the Greek word used for her many tasks is *διακονία* which also means "service, ministering, and promoting religion."³ With this layered meaning in mind, it is clear to me that Jesus' response is not about Martha's ministry, but her preoccupation with Mary.

I think the most pivotal shift in translation is found in v. 42 where it is often translated, "Mary has chosen the better part." When you

look at the Greek, however, it can also be translated as, "a good portion" or "a useful share."⁴ In light of this, I believe Jesus is not offering a value judgment between them, but assuaging Martha's worry by affirming that Mary is doing a good portion of the work too.

Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, a place that was reserved for men. I wonder if Martha was concerned about what might happen to Mary for being out of "her place." Jesus' response is radical because he affirms she has chosen a good portion of the work, and even though she is not where she is expected to be, no one can take that away from her. Jesus protects her right to assume the position of a disciple.

In this image, Mary eagerly reaches toward Jesus. Her clothing is patterned with mustard seeds and flowers because her faith may seem small, but her boundary-breaking faithfulness will nurture her faith to grow beyond what seems possible. Martha reaches toward Mary to pull her into more "appropriate" work. Martha's dress is patterned with open hands to image her vital ministry of welcome, service, and cultivating space for Jesus' message to take root. I imaged Jesus equally affirming both Mary and Martha's lived-out faiths. He is green, the combination of Mary and Martha's colors (yellow + blue), showing that he embodies the integration of both faith and works. —Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

³ blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g1248/kjv/tr/0-1/

⁴ Strong's Greek Lexicon, G18 and G3310.

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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