

**“Restoration”**  
*Fifth Sunday in Lent*  
MARCH 21, 2021

**GATHER**

*People gather around Jesus as his reputation becomes known from town to town. As we gather virtually or physically, we too are yearning for presence, for peace, for help.*

**Praise Music**

**Welcome and Announcements**

Question to Ponder:

What does it mean to be interdependent with the environment?

**Prelude with Announcement Slides**

**Threshold**

We continue our Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives.

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

**APPROACH**

*People opened their lives to Jesus. We are drawn to the Healer—opening our hearts with honesty about our lives and finding assurance that offers peace.*

**Broken, needing the One**  
**Open, body and soul**  
**Healer, come.**

**Opening Prayer of Confession**

Let us pray:

Life-giving God,

In the beginning, you created this universe with a phrase, “Let it be...”  
and the waters and dry land, the sky and the creatures were formed.  
You set humanity among these wonders and invited us to care and honor all things.

We have not successfully answered that call.

Seeing the abundance as a feast that would never end, we gorged ourselves,  
taking more than we could replenish at a rate that could not be sustained.  
We are beginning to comprehend the magnitude, beginning to see that things  
cannot just keep going “as usual” and not have dire consequences.

We are frightened, which is partly why we are slow to accept it.

But we now are witnesses to the forces of a world

more broken than when we inherited it:

water, wind, and wave, fire, drought, and earthquake

that signal it is time to pay attention and to make real change.

Too often we think there is nothing we can do—that the change required is too great.

It all feels overwhelming and so we look away,  
sometimes even from the small things that could make a difference  
for our own community.

Help us, Healer.

Show us our ability to chart a different course.

Forgive our inaction.

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*

## **Assurance**

I invite you to imagine a warmth begin to arise within the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. This warm orb of light is deep within you, a flame always there and ready when you need it. This warm glow begins to emerge from the recesses of your inner being and it fills you with determination and courage. It floods your whole body until your skin is glowing with it, radiating outward. You feel strong.

Know this: Jesus asks us to do hard things, to make changes,  
*knowing* we are capable.

No. Matter. What.

We *can* change in order to heal this jewel planet called home.

The calm of Christ in the storm is available.

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.

## Peace

I invite you to imagine the warmth that surrounds you extending to those who may be next to you in close proximity. Imagine it extending beyond your walls to  
the neighborhood...  
the wider community...  
the church...  
and seeing it spread like the rising sun, let it expand to all the world.  
Let this be our peace. **Amen.**

If you have not already, I invite you to open your eyes.

The peace of Christ is with you.  
**And also with you.**

### Opening Hymn: This is My Father's World UMH 144

This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears  
all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees,  
of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,  
the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker's praise.  
This is my Father's world: he shines in all that's fair;  
in the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget  
that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.  
This is my Father's world: why should my heart be sad?  
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!

## BELIEVE

*People were fortified by Jesus' words and deeds that revealed care for all—especially those marginalized. We strengthen our belief in the possibility for renewed health and vigor for all.*

## Time for Children

## A Contemporary Word

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.

– John Muir

We don't inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.

– David Brower

## Special Music

### An Ancient Word

*Matthew 8: 18-27*

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. A scribe then approached and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Another of his disciples said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

## Sermon

### ASK

*People who were healed by Jesus were not afraid to ask. And so we come before the Holy One, making our petitions and desires known, trusting the work of the Spirit.*

### Song of Preparation: Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

Lord, listen to your children praying,  
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;  
Lord, listen to your children praying,  
Send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

### Repeat

### Prayers of the People

We pray this day for...

### Lord's Prayer

## KNOW

*The parting words Jesus' gave to those he healed were often as much balm as the healing act itself. We hear words of encouragement from the One who makes beauty from brokenness.*

### Ritual Action for the Week

The words of Jesus we highlight this week from the healing story are “follow me and let the dead bury their own dead.” This may seem like harsh words. And yet we hear Jesus’ urgency. *Now* is the time to move, no matter how difficult, we cannot wait. What is past is past. There is brokenness and there are casualties in its wake. But we can move forward. We can make changes. We can face storms because we are a people led by the Healer, the Calm-in-the-Storm who can offer us faith in the midst of fear.

And so this week for our symbolic ritual action, we are going to restore some beauty by adding to the beauty of our glass pieces. You received thin craft wire and you are invited to wrap some of that wire around one of your pieces of beach glass, creating a pendant that can be hung in a window or as a necklace, a constant reminder of our role as those who must “take care,” must care for and contribute to, rather than diminish, the beauty of this earth.

Take some time now to do this simple wrapping and crafting with the wire and glass. We invite you to take a photo if you can and share it with us via [social media, e-mail, etc].

We will use these imagines in our worship next week.

## RESPOND

*Scriptural accounts of healing often end with responses from the “crowd” of witnesses. How will we proceed into the brokenness of this world and respond as the Body of Christ?*

### Closing Song: This Is My Father’s World UMH 144

This is my Father’s world, and to my listening ears  
all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.  
This is my Father’s world: I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees,  
of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father’s world, the birds their carols raise,  
the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker’s praise.  
This is my Father’s world: he shines in all that’s fair;  
in the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father’s world, O let me ne’er forget  
that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.  
This is my Father’s world: why should my heart be sad?  
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!

## **Commission**

This week the reaction of the crowd in the story is amazement at Jesus' connection to the cosmic forces of wind and wave. As scientists now try to teach us, all things are connected. We are part and parcel of all creation. Rather than dominion, we are to be a-tuned to all around us. We see the cry of creation in awakened natural disasters and we must heed the call not to hide in fear, but to work for healing.

And so in our communal discerning about how this church community could become a "health hub" through our ministry and mission, let us put our minds to imagining how we can learn about contributing to the beauty and healing of our environment. I invite you to explore with us the possibilities for a new or renewed commitment to a contribution we can make at Stevensville United Methodist Church to our larger community's effort to recover from this past year.

## **Blessing**

Now go with confidence  
that we can face the storm with Jesus in the boat,  
recovering our depth of love for all  
and our joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:  
"follow me."

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver  
salve to your soul  
and a spring in your step.  
**Amen.**

## **Postlude**