**Worship Brainstorming Summary**

**“Living Our Baptismal Calling”**

A lectionary-based (Year A) Lenten series

February 22 – April 9, 2023

(Ash Wednesday, 5 weeks of Lent, Holy Week, Easter)

**Members present:** Sue Baranowski, David Booth, Ed Baranowski, Jim Post, Paul Power, Betty Kinney, Jean Kelly, Pastor Mary Ivanov, Karen Booth

*“The worship we hope to develop will be rooted in Scripture, centered on Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It will be relevant to local and emerging culture, while addressing the needs of believers and unbelievers alike. Above all, it will intentionally* ***engage*** *people physically, emotionally, intellectually, and soulfully.”*

Felt needs: What physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual need are we addressing in this service so that worship is **engaging** and a means of making disciples? What question needs to be posed/answered so that we are making disciples?

**Comments:** 1) The nature of the church is changing. Church leaders’ focus has moved from church attendance (butts in the pews) to **church engagement** (active participation in worship, study, mission work, evangelism, etc.). 2) **How do we engage in the world?** Social media tends to be negative. We post things that we never would say in a face-to-face conversation. It is a problem for people of all ages. Related idea: FaceBook jail. 3) Face-to-face interactions are becoming less common, even when people are sitting in the same room. 4) What does discipleship look like today? It has always changed, but the rate of change has accelerated and negativity is amplified. 5) Related idea: Maturity. Do we act like the people in the Progressive advertisements (becoming our parents) or do we exhibit true maturity?

**2023 theme connection:** Baptism is not the end of our faith journey, but one step in a lifelong, Spirit-led process meant to guide us every day. **Comments:** 1) Wesley would describe this process as sanctification. 2) This series is not about whether a person has been baptized or not.

**2023 Theme:**  Jesus is Our Past, Present, and Future Hope

**2023 key Scripture verses:** 38For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither

angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39neither height

nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of

God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Romans 8: 38-39 (NIV)*

**Major spoken/unspoken needs:**

* It is so easy to not attend church when I can watch it online. Worship is for God, not us. Convenience vs. sacrifice. Logistics vs. routine.
* Pastoral care, especially around losses: Grief. Family. Division. Addiction. Unrealized dreams. Financial woes. Abortion. Marriage and divorce.
* Relationships. Reconciliation.
* Fear and regret

**Notes on Lent** (from UMC Discipleship Ministries)**:**

The primary purpose of Lent from the earliest church, was to prepare candidates for baptism at Easter. Lent was designed to help the church help these candidates become purged from sinful ways, and lie more fully into the way of Christ. Lent was and is the final stage of labor before new birth, a final incubation before “hatching” into new life. Lent is the time for the congregation to fulfill its role as “midwife to the Spirit” as fully as the Spirit may allow.

This work of midwifery is solemn, but not somber. It is also joyful, hopeful, challenging, and expectant. We fix our eyes on the birth or growth to come in the lives of the candidates with whom we journey, and we do what it takes to facilitate not just their rebirth through baptism, but their thriving in new life from that day forward.

**Comments:** “Midwife to the Spirit” is an interesting way of thinking about the process.

**Resources:**

* Discipleship Ministries: [“Living Our Baptismal Calling”](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/planning-for-worship-during-lent-year-a-living-our-baptismal-calling) (2013)
* Discipleship Ministries: [“Living Our Baptismal Calling”](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/lent-living-our-baptismal-calling) (2017)
* [Come to the Waters: Baptism and Our Ministry of Welcoming Seekers and Making Disciples](https://www.amazon.com/Come-Waters-Welcoming-Disciples-Initiation/dp/0881771791) by Daniel T Benedict Jr.
* Discipleship Ministries: [“I Will”: Living Our Baptismal Vows](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/i-will-living-our-baptismal-vows?mc_cid=c4aafa78e6&mc_eid=b090e4f745)
* GBOD’s “Living Out Our Baptismal Calling” ([used in 2017 for Lent and Easter](https://lakeharborumc.org/2017/02/2017-lent-easter-worship-brainstorming/))
* [Baptism: Help kids explore the mystery](https://www.umc.org/en/content/baptism-help-kids-explore-the-mystery?utm_source=umnow&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=members&utm_content=conversation09/12/2022&mkt_tok=MDc4LUpYUS02NDMAAAGG0FeeCPPbWnEUNlHT6ahxI8Y6mSLkkfgvQviQjEO5Vy2Tbtny2_nVURBYOwMhqJMu2xIuiEH0suABfOXJALNJbzAFfbL7IrYymUDMOOf-Tar7hViTU0VStEI)

**Visuals:** Some inspirational images are on [our website](https://lakeharborumc.org/2023/02/living-our-baptismal-calling-brainstorming-for-lent-and-easter-2023/). We particularly like the examples with a well, pots/water jugs, purple fabric, large cross, rocks, and “watery” stuff. *Note from Karen:* We have lots of drop clothes which have been painted to look like rocks.

* Baptismal font, water, shells, baptismal pictures
* Staging ideas from [Ted and Company](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yycjXSnCAE)’s Temptations of Jesus

Pictures of some of our favorite visuals are on the last page of this document.

* Pinterest:
  + Lenten Season ([Janis Williams](https://www.pinterest.com/janiswilliams/lenten-season/))
  + [Lent decorations for church](https://www.pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=Lent%20decorations%20for%20church&rs=srs&b_id=BGrRzDvdxFesAAAAAAAAAADJJz3s1FPw8wRckWKNk-VF6Nemb3LbZvtTWkn46InEVTAzfCaxBAiO8LL6HTxSkJg2zb2pAEmZ9w&source_id=pTmdnclV)
  + [Lynne’s pins](https://www.pinterest.com/lynandlid/living-our-baptismal-calling/)

**Publicity:** “See You on Sunday!” and March Harbor Light

**Social Justice Issue for February 2023:** Literacy

**Social Justice Issue for March 2023:** Mental Health

**Social Justice Issue for April 2023:** Creation Care

**Notes about The VOICE translation:**

* Standard type relays the meaning of the original language
* Italicized type brings out the nuances of the original language, completing ideas that would have been obvious to the original audience.
* Delineated material is separate from Bible text. It gives the passage context.
* Screenplay format helps greatly in immediate comprehension of the situation and facilitates public reading.

**Noisy offering for February 2023:** Dancing with the Local Stars

**Noisy offering for March 2023:** UMCOR Sunday

**Noisy offering for April 2023:** TBA

**General discussion points:** 1) The longer stories from the Gospel of John and the questions from the baptismal vow guide this series.

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**February 22, 2023:** “Repent, Repair, Restore”

Rev. Alice Fleming Townley – Mission and Justice Coordinator for our conference

Ash Wednesday – Worship at Central UMC

**Scripture:** Isaiah 58: 1-12, Psalm 51

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**February 26, 2023:** “Called to Renounce”

1st Sunday in Lent

**Baptismal Vow:** *“Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?”*

**Scripture:** Matthew 4: 1-11 (VOICE)

**Narrator: 4**The Spirit then led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil. **2**Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. After this fast, He was, *as you can imagine,* hungry. **3***But He was also curiously stronger,* when the tempter came to Jesus.

**Devil:**  If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

**Jesus** *(quoting Deuteronomy)***:** **4**It is written, “Man does not live by bread alone. Rather, he lives on every word that comes from the mouth of the Eternal One.”

**Narrator:** The point, of course, is not that Jesus couldn’t have turned these stones to bread. A little later in the story He can make food appear when He needs to. But Jesus doesn’t work miracles out of the blue, for no reason, for show or proof or spectacle. He works them in intimate, close places; He works them to meet people’s needs and to show them the way to the Kingdom.

**5**Then the devil took Jesus to the holy city, *Jerusalem,* and he had Jesus stand at the very highest point in the holy temple.

**Devil:**  **6**If You are the Son of God, jump! *And then we will see if You fulfill* the Scripture that says, He will command His heavenly messengers concerning You,

and the messengers will buoy You in their hands  
So that You will not *crash, or fall, or even* graze Your foot on a stone.

**Jesus:**  **7**That is not the only thing Scripture says. It also says, “Do not put the Eternal One, your God, to the test.”

**Narrator: 8**And still the devil *subjected Jesus to a third test. He* took Jesus to the top of a very high mountain, and he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in all their *splendor and* glory, *their power and pomp*.

**Devil:**  **9**If You bow down and worship me, I will give You all these kingdoms.

**Jesus:**  **10**Get away from Me, Satan. *I will not serve you. I will instead follow* Scripture, which tells us to “worship the Eternal One, your God, and serve only Him.”

**Narrator: 11**Then the devil left Jesus. And heavenly messengers came and ministered to Him.

**Synopsis:** What does it mean for people to renounce Satan and all his works? At the start of Lent, we encounter the temptation of Jesus and claim God’s call to make the same renunciations as a first step of discipleship - and live as those who have done so - trusting most fully in God rather than ourselves, our leaders, or our plans.



**Felt need:** To understand the subtleties of temptation and commit to resist temptation

**Visuals:** Bread, stones.

**Hands-on item:** Stones with things to give up written on them.

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Jesus, Tempted in the Desert* (FWS 2105); *Seek Ye First* (UMH 405); *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley* (FWS 2112); *It Is Well with My Soul* (UMH 377); *Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days* (UMH 269) - **anthem?**

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:**

* What do you think of when you hear, *“Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?”*
  + Seven deadly sins.
  + We don’t often talk about our sins or confession. Catholics may be *better* at it.
  + Repenting is personal.
  + Public and silent prayers of confession in worship: Jean said sometimes she needs more time. ☺ Sue finds it helpful to have some confessions memorized.
  + There is power in confessing sin aloud and praying for forgiveness.
  + We stand in need of a savior.
* Holy Spirit vs. the spirit(s) of wickedness: 1) Methodists don’t usually think about exorcism, but Pastor Mary said that she has prayed with someone who was fighting evil, which is in fact an exorcism. 2) Sue is reading a book about the spirit world and can tell us more as she gets through it.
* Temptation can be subtle. Ex.: Wanting to say something we shouldn’t without accepting the consequences. Seeking revenge. Reacting without pausing to think.
* Where is truth?
* Jesus was driven into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Why? It does show his human side. He could have satisfied all his needs himself, but choose obedience to God. Which spirit sent him there? The Holy Spirit.
* Temptation:
  + We are tested on a daily basis. Do we trust our own self/plans, leaders, or God? Our society values hyper-independence which leads to vanity.
  + Subtle temptations: Chocolate during Lent; the opportunity to do something you know is wrong; greed; envy; lust. If you pause before acting, it is likely to be a temptation.
  + Impulse control: We don’t expect children to gradually learn to control their impulses. How is it that some adults do awful things, like shooting someone over something very small? It is hard to make good choices if you don’t have a good foundation. Faith needs to be part of that. We need to see others as fellow humans.

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**March 5, 2023:** “Called to Be Born Again”

2nd Sunday in Lent

**Baptismal Vow:** *“Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?”*

Through powerful image of new birth and the biblical story of the serpent in the wilderness, Jesus shows Nicodemus and us what it takes for us to accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

**Scripture John 3: 1-1**7 (VOICE): **NOTE: There are two options for reading.**

**Narrator: 3**Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees, a man with some clout among his people. **2**He came to Jesus under the cloak of darkness to question Him.

**Nicodemus:** Teacher, some of us have been talking. You are obviously a teacher who has come from God. The signs You are doing are proof that God is with You.

**Narrator:** At this time, Israel’s Roman occupiers have given a small group of Sadducees and Pharisees limited powers to rule, and Nicodemus is one of the Pharisees. He holds a seat on the ruling council known as the Sanhedrin, and surprisingly Nicodemus is among those who seek Jesus for His teaching. It appears that he believes more about Jesus than he wants others to know, so he comes at night.

**Jesus:**  **3**I tell you the truth: only someone who experiences birth for a second time can *hope to* see the kingdom of God.

**Nicodemus:** **4***I am a grown man*. How can someone be born again when he is old *like me*? Am I to crawl back into my mother’s womb for a second birth? *That’s impossible!*

**Jesus:**  **5**I tell you the truth, if someone does not experience water and Spirit birth, there’s no chance he will make it into God’s kingdom. **6***Like from like.* Whatever is born from flesh is flesh; whatever is born from Spirit is spirit. **7**Don’t be shocked by My words, *but I tell you the truth*. Even you, *an educated and respected man among your people,* must be reborn *by the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God*. **8**The wind blows all around us as if it has a will of its own; we *feel and* hear it, but we do not understand where it has come from or where it will end up. Life in the Spirit is as if it were the wind of God.

**Nicodemus:** **9**I still do not understand how this can be.

**Jesus:**  **10**Your responsibility is to instruct Israel *in matters of faith*, but you do not comprehend *the necessity of life in the Spirit*? **11**I tell you the truth: we speak about the things we know, and we give evidence about the things we have seen, and you choose to reject *the truth of* our witness. **12**If you do not believe when I talk to you about ordinary, earthly realities, then heavenly realities will certainly elude you. **13**No one has ever journeyed to heaven above except the One who has come down from heaven—the Son of Man, who is of heaven. **14**Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. In the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up; **15**then all those who believe in Him will experience everlasting life.

**16**For God expressed His love for the world in this way: He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him will not face everlasting destruction, but will have everlasting life. **17**Here’s the point. God didn’t send His Son into the world to judge it; instead, He is here to rescue a world *headed toward certain destruction*.

**Reading:**John 3:1-5, 14-17 (Translation, Taylor Burton-Edwards)

**Reader 1 (Narrator):** Now there was a person named Nicodemus sent from the Pharisees, who were religious leaders among the Jewish people. He came toward Jesus at night and said to him:

**Congregation (Nicodemus):** **Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, because no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God were with him.**

**Reader 1:** Jesus answered and said to him:

**Reader 2 (Jesus):** Truly, truly tell you, unless you are born anew, you cannot see the kingdom of God.

**Congregation:** **How can a person be born once old? We can’t enter into the mother’s womb a second time and be born!**

**Reader 2:** Truly, truly I tell you: Unless you are born of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. And just as Moses lifted on high the serpent in the desert, so also must the Son of Humankind be lifted up, so that everyone believing in him should have eternal life.

**All:** **This is how much God loved the world: God gave God’s only-begotten son, so that everyone believing into him should not be destroyed, but should have eternal life.**

**Reader 2:** For God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world, but so the world might be saved through him.

**Synopsis:** Nicodemus ask Jesus what it means to be “born again,” and we might have similar questions about our faith. “Born again” has become almost “code language” rather than an invitation to be in relationship with God. Baptism is the sign and ordinary means of rebirth. But the water and the ritual alone do not make rebirth happen. This is the Spirit’s work.

**Felt need:** To hear God’s invitation to relationship (again) and know that the Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts

**Visuals:** Loosely related image – dunked or sprinkled, right.

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Holy Communion, Reaffirmation of Baptism?

**Media possibilities:** “LUMO – John 2:23–3:36.” Watch 0:36-3:40. <https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch/lumo-the-gospel-of-john.html/lumo-john-2-23-3-36/english.html> Web license: No.

**Music:** *To God Be the Glory* (UMH 98), *Freely, Freely* (UMH 389)*, Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters* (UMH 605), *Come to the Table of Grace*

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

Celtic prayer attributed to David Adam:

*Be gentle when you touch bread,*

*Let it not lie uncared for – unwanted.*

*So often bread is taken for granted.*

*There is so much beauty in bread,*

*Beauty of sun and soil,*

*Beauty of honest toil.*

*Winds and rain have caressed it,*

*Christ often blessed it.*

*Be gentle when you touch bread.*

**Discussion points:**

* *Baptismal vow:* Active resistance – we can’t do it alone. We are given help. Seeking justice.
* *Nicodemus:* Comes at night so he won’t be seen. He has already seen what Jesus has done and wants to know more.
  + Speaks up in defense of Jesus before his colleagues (John 7: 5-52).
  + Brought an extravagantly large mixture of myrrh and aloes to embalm Jesus (John 19:39).
* John 3:16 focusses on personal salvation. John 3: 17 goes on to say, “For God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world, but so the world might be saved through him,” which is communal.
* Baptism.
  + Some denominations equate baptism with “being saved” and no baptism with damnation. Methodists don’t.
  + Infant baptisms: The vows include participation of a community in raising the child. Pastor Mary would of course baptize a dying baby; it is a pastoral care issue. In less urgent circumstances, she asks what baptism means to the parents? Will they remain connected to a church community?
  + Last rites: Catholics and Episcopalians offer them.
  + Rebaptisms: No. The Spirit continues to work. No do-overs are necessary. There is a chance to confirm the vows for oneself when confirmed.
  + We are called to be salt and light for the world – share love.
* Born again:
  + Do we see “born again” as code language or an invitation to a relationship? Being born again is not a “one and done guarantee of salvation.” It is a sign of God’s grace and a choice we make every day.
  + Accepting Christ as our savior: Some people can point to one spectacular event, but many of us have found that it is a continual process.

Pastor Mary is open to a different sermon title

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**March 12, 2023:** “Called to Drink and Share Living Water”

3rd Sunday in Lent, DST begins, Scouting Sunday (?)



**Baptismal Vow:** *“Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his*

*grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has*

*opened to all people (people of all ages, nations, and races)?”*

In an encounter with a woman at a well in Samaria, Jesus confesses he is the Messiah, and she not only embraces this, but leads others to make the same confession.

**Scripture:** John 4: 5-42 Translation and reading by Taylor Burton-Edwards

**Reader 1 (Narrator):** So Jesus comes into the city of Samaria called Sychar, near the region which Jacob gave to Joseph, his son. The well of Jacob was there. Worn out from travelling the roads, he was sitting down upon the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria comes to draw water. Jesus says to her:

**Reader 2 (Jesus):** Give me to drink.

**Reader 1:** (His disciples had gone off into the city to purchase some food). So the Samaritan woman says to him:

**Congregation (woman): How is that that you, a Jewish person, are requesting from me, a Samaritan woman, something to drink?**

**Reader 1:** (Jewish people do not associate or share dishes with Samaritans). Jesus answered and said to her:

**Reader 2:** If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who is saying to you, “Give me to drink,” you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

**Congregation:** **Sir, you do not have anything to draw with, and the shaft is deep. So from where do you have living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this shaft, and who himself drank from it along with his sons and his flocks?**

**Reader 2:** Everyone drinking from this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks from the water I will give them will not thirst [from now] into the age to come, because the water I will give them shall become for them a well of water leaping up into eternal life.

**Congregation:** **Sir, give me this water so I will neither thirst nor come back here to draw. I know Messiah is coming, the one the Hellenists call Christ. Whenever he comes, he will announce everything to us.**

**Reader 2:** I am he, the one speaking to you.

**Reader 1:** Just then, his disciples came, and they were astonished that he was speaking with a woman. Yet no one said, “What are you looking for?” or “Why are you talking with her?”  
So this woman let go of her water jar, and went away into the city, and starts saying to the people there:

**Congregation:** **Come with me. See the person who has told me everything I have done! Mightn’t this be the Christ?**

**Reader 1:** From that town many of the Samaritans believed into [Jesus] because of the word of the woman testifying, “He told me everything I’ve done!” So when Samaritans came to him, asking him to stay there among them, he stayed there two days. And many more believed through his word. And they said to the woman:

**Congregation:** **It’s no longer because of what you said that we believe. For we have heard and we know that this man is truly the savior of the world.**

**Synopsis:** Like the Samaritan woman whom Jesus encounters at the well, personal and cultural baggage can prevent us from seeing and experiencing the saving power of God in Jesus Christ. What do we need to let go of to enable us to walk faithfully with all who come seeking living water?

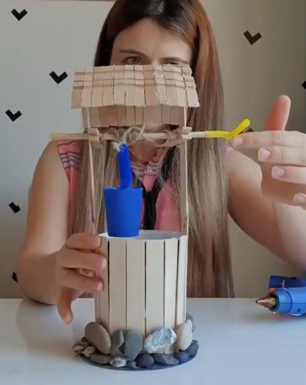
**Felt need:** To let go of whatever “baggage” we carry in order to embrace Jesus – and to share our witness of his love with others

**Visuals:** running water

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:** We watched the first video as a group and really liked it. The second one offers some very good ideas for sanctuary visuals.

* **“Jesus Loves: Woman at the Well.” Length: 2:50. Cost: $16.99. Web license: Yes. For all the times she went to fetch water, feeling alone and ashamed, the woman at the well never imagined that she’d encounter Jesus – a man who knew all about her, and yet, did not judge her. <https://skitguys.com/videos/jesus-loves-woman-at-the-well>
* “Jesus and the Outcast Woman at the Well.” Length: 7:21. Web license: Probably not. An extended take on this story as told by The Chosen. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ordhsDeAt60>

**Music:** *Fill My Cup, Lord* (UMH 641), *You Who Are Thirsty* (FWS 2132)*, All Who Are Thirsty*



**Children’s Time:** Related kids’ activity – making a well. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/11118330324944918/>

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:**

* *Scripture:* The woman comes to the well mid-day, hopeful that no one else will be there. Her history with men has probably made her a subject of gossip and ridicule. Jesus shouldn’t have been talking to her for a variety of reasons. By his actions, he shows that he loves her and isn’t judging her. Jesus leads her back into community.
* What keeps us from receiving and sharing the gift of good news? This woman was waiting for the messiah. She saw him in Jesus.
* Living Water refers to Jesus’ word and his acceptance of her. It symbolizes washing away sins, salvation, and quenching a spiritual thirst. She is born again.
* The disciples chastise Jesus for his encounter.
* Jews and Samaritans: Among the most significant differences between the Samaritans and the Jews is **the site which they believe God chose for his dwelling**. While the Jews hold that God chose Mount Zion in Jerusalem, Samaritans believe he chose Mount Gerizim near Shechem. Also, Samaritans (northern Israel) had been conquered by Assyrians and intermarried. Jews from Judea (southern Israel) remained racially and religiously Jewish. Paul later tried to get them to heal the rift.
* What baggage do we need to let go of? Guilt and shame. Why do we keep picking the baggage back up? How can we support each other in the midst of hard stuff? Acknowledging it is a good start.
* What does it mean to really accept grace? Letting others help. Trust. Being more vulnerable, less independent. It is part of a journey, not a one-time event.

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**March 19, 2023:** “Called to Be Healed of Blindness”

4th Sunday in Lent, UMCOR Sunday

**Baptismal Vow:** *Will you nurture these persons in Christ’s holy Church, that by your teaching and example they may be guided to accept God’s grace for themselves, to profess their faith openly, and to lead a Christian life? Will you nurture one another in*

*the Christian faith and life, and include these persons now before you in your care?*

The response of the crowds to Jesus’ healing of a man born blind says much about how

our congregation can actively “nurture one another in the Christian faith and life, and

include these persons now before you in your care,” or fail to do so. **Comments:** 1) Faith is not just between God and me. Hospitality opens the door to a community that can nurture faith. 2) At the last Ad Board meeting, we talked about engagement. Rather than counting the number of people in worship, we need to look at spiritual depth. How are we showing our commitment to Christ and others? Pastor Mary noted how her mother has received cards and text during her cancer treatment.

**Scripture:** John 9: 1-41 Translation and reading by Taylor Burton-Edwards

**Reader 1 (Narrator):** And going along, Jesus saw a person blind from birth. And his disciples asked him:

**Congregation:** **Rabbi, who sinned? What it this man himself or his parents that made him born blind?**

**Reader 2 (Jesus):** Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God might be shown in it. I have to perform what I was sent here to perform while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

**Reader 1:** After he said these things, he spat upon the ground, made mud from the spit, and anointed the blind man’s eyes with the mud. Then he said to the blind man:

**Reader 2:** Off with you now! Wash in the pool of Siloam.

***Reader 1 (in an aside):*** Siloam means “having been sent”.

(in a regular tone of voice) So he went away from there, and washed, and he came out of the water, seeing. Then his neighbors, and those who had seen him before because he was a beggar, said:

**Band or Choir:** Wasn’t this man the one who sat and begged?

**Reader 1:** Others were saying:

**Congregation Left:** **Yes, he’s the one!**

**Congregation Right:** **No, but he looks like him.**

**Reader 3 (Blind Man):** It’s me!

**Congregation:** **How were your eyes opened?**

**Reader 3:** A man called Jesus made mud, and he anointed my eyes, and he said to me, “Off with you. Go to Siloam and wash.” So I went, and I washed, and I have new sight!

**Congregation:** **Where is that man?**

**Reader 3:** I don’t know.

**Reader 1:** Later, some Pharisees called the man who used to be blind and said to him,

**Band/Choir:** Give glory to God! We know that the man who cured you is a sinner.

**Reader 3:** Whether he is a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I know. I was blind. Now I see.

**Reader 1:** The religious leaders threw him out. Jesus heard they had thrown him out. When Jesus found him, he said:

**Reader 2:** Do you entrust your life to the Son of Man?

**Reader 3:** And who is this, sir, that I may entrust my life to him?

**Reader 2:** You have also seen him. It’s the one speaking with you.

**Reader 3:** I believe, Lord. (Kneels prostrate before Jesus)

**Reader 2:** I have come into this world in judgment, that those not seeing may see, and those seeing may become blind.

**Reader 1:** Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and they said,

**Band/Choir:** **We’re not blind, are we?**

**Reader 2:** If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now you say, “We see.” Your sin remains.

**Synopsis:** We are born with a spiritual blindness that only being born again corrects. Healing, restoration, and new life await those who open their hearts and minds to Jesus. And we’re called to support each other as we grow in faith together.

**Felt need:** To recognize our need for spiritual healing and commit to helping one another as a community of faith

**Visuals:** mud

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Holy Baptism (?)

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Amazing Grace* (UMH 378), *Open My Eyes, That I May See* (UMH 454), *Open Our Eyes, Lord* (FWS 2086), *Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus* (UMH 349)

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:**

* Some comments are found under baptismal vow on page 11.
* What is spiritual blindness?
  + Not understanding Jesus
  + Resisting or not acknowledging Jesus and his message
  + Repeating Scripture without understanding what it truly means. Example: Praying the Lord’s Prayer and not acknowledging that for God to forgive me, I must forgive others.
  + Not “born again.” The difference in understanding Scripture before and after in-depth bible study. An epiphany.

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**March 26, 2023:** “Called to Come Forth”

5th Sunday in Lent

**Baptismal Vow:** *According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of*

*Christ’s holy Church and serve as Christ’s representatives in the world?*

The faith we confess, and the faith that transforms us, is more than intellectual assent to a theological construct. It is to stake our lives on the Triune God, and so join Martha’s confession, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into this world.” **Comments:** Being called to serve as Christ’s representatives in the world is a big challenge. We can start by being kind. For many of us, we don’t necessarily feel like we have had any one big transformative experience. It has been a series of baby steps. Most of us know or know of people who have had big, sudden transformations. **Note after the gathering:** [*Reconstructing Faith from the Ashes*](https://www.inviteresources.com/article-details/reconstructing-faith-from-the-ashes)by Michael Beck, Jan. 13, 2022, is a good example of a big transformation.

**Scripture:** John 11: 1-45 Translation and reading by Taylor Burton-Edwards

**Reader 1 (Narrator):** Now a certain man fell ill, Lazarus, from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister, Martha. This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother, Lazarus, was ill. So the sisters sent to Jesus, saying:

**Congregation:** **Lord, the friend you love is ill.**

**Reader 1:** When Jesus heard it, he said:

**Reader 2 (Jesus):** This illness doesn’t end in death, but in the glory of God, so the son of God may be glorified through it.

**Reader 1:** Now, Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Still, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was two days more. Then, after that, he said to his disciples:

**Reader 2:** Let’s go to Judea again.

**Band/Choir:** **Rabbi, people in Judea want to stone us, and you’re taking us there again?**

**Reader 2:** Aren’t there twelve hours of daylight? If people walk in the daylight, they don’t stumble because they see the light of this world. But if they go walking at night, they do stumble, because there is no light in them.  
Silence  
Lazarus, our friend, has fallen asleep. But I’m heading there to waken him!

**Band/Choir:** **Lord, if he’s asleep, he’s going to be safe.**

**Reader 2:** Lazarus died. And I’m happy for your sake that I wasn’t there. This way, you might believe. So, let’s go to him!

**Reader 1:** When Martha heard that Jesus was arriving, she went to greet him. Mary sat in the house.

**Congregation, Left Side: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Yet I know that whatever you ask God, God will give you.**

**Reader 2:** Your brother will rise again.

**Congregation, Right Side: I know he will be raised at the resurrection on the last day.**

**Reader 2:** I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever entrusts their life to me, even though they should die, yet they will live. And everyone who is alive and entrusts their life to me shall not die in the age to come. Do you believe this?

**Congregation, Right Side: Yes, Lord. I have believed that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the One who is coming into the world.**

**Reader 1:** There were several religious leaders with Mary in the house, comforting her. They saw Mary get up and go out, and they followed her, assuming she was heading to the tomb to bewail there. But when Mary got to where Jesus was, she saw him, and fell at his feet, saying:

**Congregation, Left: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**

**Reader 1:** When Jesus saw her bewailing, and the religious leaders who had come with her also bewailing, he groaned in his spirit. He was stirred up.

**Reader 2:** Where have you laid him?

**Choir or band:** **Sir, come and see.**

**Reader 1:** Jesus teared up and began to weep. So again, groaning inwardly, Jesus goes to the tomb. A cave was there, and a stone lay upon it.

**Reader 2:** Lift away the stone.

**Reader 1:** Martha, sister of the dead man, said to him:

**Congregation, Right: Lord, already he smells bad. It’s been four days.**

**Reader 2:** Did I not say to you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?

**Reader 1:** So they lifted away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

**Reader 2:** Father, I thank you that you have heard me. Indeed, I have always known you hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing around so they might believe you have sent me.

(Loudly shouting): Lazarus, come out!

**Reader 1:** The dead man came out, bound foot and hand with strips of cloth, and his face was wrapped with a facecloth.

**Reader 2:** Unbind him, and let him go his way.

**Synopsis:** Today’s story takes great pains to show us that Lazarus was really and truly dead. And, as Martha reminds us, there is already a stench around the tomb. We too are dead in our trespasses and sins. In Baptism, Jesus restores us calls the community to complete what he has begun. In community, we become witnesses to the power of God to bring new life.

**Felt need:** To leave behind what holds us back from new life

**Visuals:** bright

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Lord of the Dance* (UMH 261), *O the Lamb* (UMH 300)*, Hymn of Promise* (UMH 707)

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:**

* There are addition comments on page 13 under baptismal vows.
* Baptism: For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. *Romans 6:4 (New Living Translation)*
* What holds us back from new life? The fear of dying.
* This story shows Jesus’ humanity. These people are his friends. He has let them down and now are mad at him.
* The mental picture of Jesus calling Lazarus from the tomb and walking out covered in strips of cloth reminds Pastor Mary of a horror movie.
* Lazarus appears later in John 12, six days before the Passover. Jesus was a guest at dinner served by Mary and Martha.
* “I am the resurrection and the life.” *John 11:25*

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**April 2, 2023:** “Called to Praise and Ponder”

Palm & Passion Sunday

**Scripture:** Matthew 21: 1-11 (VOICE)

**Narrator:** After a great parade, Jesus and His disciples walk into the temple area, and what He sees enrages Him. He sees moneychangers, buying and selling. He sees men sitting on benches, hawking doves to those who have come from the countryside to make a sacrifice. He sees that the salesmen and teachers have turned a sanctuary of worship into a place of spiritual prostitution. This is the place where Jesus came as a boy to sit with the great teachers. It is the place where His Father receives the offerings of His people. It is more than Jesus can take.

Can anyone be surprised at this other side to Jesus? He has turned out to be not just a kindly teacher; instead, He is the Anointed One, not to be taken lightly. In the midst of this scene filled with joy and chaos, there are extremes. Some are beginning to understand who this man from Galilee is—the Anointed—but the rulers are having great difficulty with the disruption to their orderly world.

**21**Jesus, the disciples, and the great crowds were heading toward Jerusalem when they came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus stopped and beckoned to two of the disciples.

**Jesus:**  **2**Go to the village over there. There you’ll find a donkey tied *to a post* and a foal beside it. Untie them and bring them to Me. **3**If anyone tries to stop you, then tell him, “The Master needs these,” and he will send the donkey and foal immediately.

**Narrator: 4***He sent the disciples on ahead so His entry into Jerusalem could* fulfill what the prophet *Zechariah* had *long since* foretold: **5**Tell this to Zion’s daughter, “Look—your King is approaching seated humbly on a donkey, a young foal, a beast of burden.”

**6**So the disciples went off and followed Jesus’ instructions. **7**They brought the donkey and foal *to Jesus*, they spread their cloaks on the animals, and Jesus sat down on them. **8**The great crowd followed suit, laying their cloaks on the road. Others cut leafy branches from the trees and scattered those *before Jesus*. **9**And the crowds went before Jesus, *walked alongside Him*, and processed behind—all singing.

**Crowd: Hosanna, praises to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Eternal One! Hosanna in the highest!**

**Narrator: The way Jesus enters the city on a lowly donkey, with crowds surrounding Him singing praises, surprises many within Jerusalem.**

**10***And that is how* Jesus came into Jerusalem. The people noticed this strange parade. They wondered who this could be, *this humble bearded man on a donkey who incited such songs*.

**Crowd: 11 This is Jesus, the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee.**

**Scripture:** Philippians 2: 5-11 (MSG)

**5-8**Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

**9-11**Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

**Synopsis:** Jesus was welcomed with shouts of “Hosanna!” as he entered Jerusalem – an appeal for salvation. Holy Week leads us to remember that our praise can quickly turn into ridicule if we don’t remember who Jesus is – not the One who will give us exactly what we want, but the Messiah we need and the One who suffers for the whole world.

**Felt need:** To truly enter Jesus’ life and death

**Visuals:**

**Hands-on item:** palm branches

**Activity:** Holy Communion (?). We’ll definitely offer Communion on Thursday. Think about whether we will serve it today as scheduled.

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* (UMH 278), *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley* (FWS 2112); *All Glory, Laud and Honor* (UMH 280)

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Drama:** *A Tale of Two Friends.* Two of Jesus’ closest friends talk about the night of Jesus’ arrent. By the end of the night, both men will realize that their acts of betrayal are the cause of Jesus’ death. Characters: Peter and Judas. Time: Under 5 minutes. Staging: Can be performed as a Reader’s Theater with two individually lit areas, side-by-side with both men facing the congregation.

**Discussion points:**

* Palm Sunday worship invites us to praise Jesus and ponder his life, ministry, and death – it is an invitation to Holy Week in its entirety. We turn from praise quickly when our expectations for in a savior (power/might) don’t meet reality (suffering servant). Who wants to suffer?
* Our observations: Crowds are fickle. Loud voices drown out others.
* Who is Jesus? To us? For us? He offers grace and expects us to do stuff in response to the offer. Those who wanted him to take down Rome, may have appreciated this question: Do you want a savior that kicks ass or rides in on one?

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**April 6, 2023:** “Called to Serve”

Holy Thursday

Could we use ideas from 2020’s “A Place at the Table” series?

**Scripture:** Psalm 116: 1-2, 12-19; I Corinthians 11: 23-26; John 13: 1-17, 31b-35

**Synopsis:** Remembering God’s saving work from the Exodus until the Last Supper invites us to experience God’s grace and respond in loving service

Jesus’ relationship with his disciples was intimate as they ate together and served together, but the image of Jesus washing their feet is possibly the most powerful example of servanthood other than the crucifixion. He connects his service to love, and so we continue to serve in his name as a way to share his love and grace.

**Felt need:** To hear what Jesus says – and do what he says

**Visuals:** Three vignettes, one for each scene. The 2012 script planning sheet, script, and set sketch are on our [website](https://lakeharborumc.org/2023/02/living-our-baptismal-calling-brainstorming-for-lent-and-easter-2023/).

* Scene 1: Narrator and on nonspeaking part
  + *Set:* A door with lintel or doorposts.
  + *Props:* “blood” for marking the doorpost.
  + Narrator reads Exodus 12: 1-4, 11-14 in which God tells Moses how to prepare for the original Passover meal.
  + Show a clip from *The Prince of Egypt* showing the application of blood to the lintels and doorposts (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXmru6NrSAY>).
  + End the scene by marking the doorpost.
* Scene 2: Narrator and Paul (nonspeaking part)
  + Set: Paul seated at his writing desk.
  + Props: table, oil lamp or candle, pen, parchment.
  + Narrator reads and intro and 1 Corinthians 23-26 in which Paul tells of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
* Scene 3: Narrator, Jesus, Simon Peter, and the rest of the Disciples (nonspeaking)
  + *Set:* A low table with disciples reclining around it. Watch *The Apostle Peter and the Last Supper* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYA9Mr4Hd4c> begin at 33 minutes) for staging ideas.
  + *Props:* cups, bowls, bread, towel, pitcher, basin, proper clothing for Jesus.
  + Narrator reads John 13: 1-6. Simon Peter and Jesus reenact the footwashing (John 13: 7-17, 31b-35).

**Hands-on item:**

**Activity:** Finger food potluck before the service (?), Footwashing and handwashing, Holy Communion, Prayer vigil. **Note:** Jim Post will get information out about the Prayer Vigil.

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Jesu, Jesu* (UMH 432), *Make Me a Servant* (FWS 2176), *The Servant Song* (FWS 2222); *Come to the Table of Grace* (WS 3168); Taize: *Stay With Me, Bless the Lord, Wait for the* *Lord, O Lord, Hear My Prayer, Nothing Can Trouble, Ubi Caritas/Live in Charity*

**~~Children’s Time:~~**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:** Karen would like to see if we can try using two cameras for the livestream and is looking for some control booth helpers who are open to doing something new (and probably a bit more demanding).

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**April 7, 2023:** “Stations of the Cross – Ancient and Modern/Then and Now”

Good Friday

Pastor Mary is working on this worship service with MMM, but is planning to adapt the

template used in 2014. The 2014 script and accompanying PowerPoint presentation are on our [website](https://lakeharborumc.org/2023/02/living-our-baptismal-calling-brainstorming-for-lent-and-easter-2023/).

**Synopsis:** We don’t always make the connection that Jesus was executed by those in power and those who went along with them. How do we look around and see Jesus’ suffering in our midst today?

**Felt need:** To journey with Jesus through suffering

**Visuals:** Pictures of local spaces and buildings. Black draping. Giant crown of thorns.

**Hands-on item:** Cement nails dipped in red finger nail polish.

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Were You There?* (UMH 288), *Lamb of God* (FWS 2113)

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:** 1)Jim still remembers a Good Friday Service at a Presbyterian Church in Grand Haven. They concluded the service with the sound of nails being hammered into a cross. 2) Other lasting Good Friday memories: Raising a cross. Dropping stones.

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**April 9, 2023:** “Called to Rise”

Easter Sunday

**Scripture:** Matthew 28: 1-10 (NIV)

**28 1-4**After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God’s angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn’t move.

**5-6**The angel spoke to the women: “There is nothing to fear here. I know you’re looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.

**7**“Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He is risen from the dead. He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.’ That’s the message.”

**8-10**The women, **deep in wonder and full of joy,** lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. “Good morning!” he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, “You’re holding on to me for dear life! Don’t be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I’ll meet them there.”

**Scripture:** Colossians 3: 1-4 (NIV)

**3**Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2**Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3**For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4**When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**Synopsis:** Jesus’ crucifixion isn’t the end of the story, and his saving work doesn’t end at the cross. We don’t just sit in awe at resurrection either. The joy of salvation is lived out when we go and tell (and show) others about it. The reality of resurrection isn’t something to keep to ourselves, but something to share.

**Felt need:** To claim the joy of resurrection and promise of new life

**Visuals:** Take down the dark visuals of Lent and the rest of Holy Week.

**Hands-on item:** Stick cross

**Activity:**

**Media possibilities:**

**Music:** *Christ the Lord Is Risen Today* (UMH 302); *He Lives* (UMH 310); *Up from the Grave He Arose* (UMH 322); *Crown Him with Many Crowns* (UMH 327); *Because He Lives* (UMH 364), *I Will Rise*

**Children’s Time:**

**Social media:**

**Related articles:**

**Discussion points:** 1) Jesus’ story doesn’t end with his death or resurrection. The Good News continues. We are called to share it.

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**Sanctuary visuals:** We particularly like the examples with a well, pots/water jugs, purple fabric, large cross (maybe the mosaic one from the youth room), rocks, and “watery” stuff. Baptismal font, water, shells. *Note from Karen:* We have lots of drop clothes which have been painted to look like rocks. The door frame might be useful for portraying Nicodemus night visit, the place where Lazarus was laid, and the door in the Holy Thursday drama.

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