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(For home churching, you may wish to light candles, put on some soft, wordless music, gather communion elements, a bit of bread, something to drink, find a place where you will be undisturbed, silence your cell phones and computers... )

**March 22, Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**Introit**

***We are not alone. We live in God's world.***

***We are not alone. We live in God's world.***

***We are called to seek out justice,  
to proclaim Christ, crucified and risen.***

***Our light, and our hope.***

***We are not alone. We are not alone. We are not alone.***

**Call to Worship, Psalm 23**

**One: God is my shepherd, I shall not want.**

**Many: God makes me lie down in green pastures.**

**One: God leads me beside still waters;**

**Many: God restores my soul and leads me in right paths. *(continued...)***

**One: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;**

**Many: For you, O God, are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.**

**One: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;**

**Many:** You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

**One:** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

**Many:** And, I shall dwell in the house of God my whole life long. Amen.

### **Opening Hymn, ‘Be Light for Our Eyes’**

piano and video graphics by Peter Black

[https://youtu.be/W1bJkBEf\\_ww](https://youtu.be/W1bJkBEf_ww)

### **Unison Prayer**

Loving God, the Psalmist sings, “I will lift up my eyes,” reminding us of our spiritual vision. To “lift up” our eyes is to open them to comprehend your presence in all things, to see rays of hope and faith rather than shadows of doubt and fear. Let our eyes be opened to the light of your truth. Restore our vision and help us to see more clearly. Help us to see as you see and to love as you love. We seek to know of your perfect love, light, and vision. Let our eyes be opened now to your everlasting love and goodness. This we ask in the spirit of Jesus, our Way Shower. Amen.

### **Assurance of Grace and Peace**

**One:** Peace be with you.

**Many:** And also with you.

**One:** Let us offer one another a sign of Peace.

*(Here you may wish to hold your hands toward the computer screen, or toward a window in your home, and send the peace and light out into the world.)*

## Passing the Peace

***Spirit of life come unto me.***

***Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.***

***Blow in the wind, rise in the sea,***

***move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.***

***Roots hold me close – wings set me free.***

***Spirit of life come to me, come to me.***

## Words of Integration & Guidance by Ed Taylor

During Jesus' lifetime, most people believed in miracles. Gods and demi-gods such as Hercules and Isis all reportedly healed the sick and overcame death. There were also myths about philosophers like Pythagoras calming storms at sea, chasing away pestilences, and being greeted as gods. The achievements of the first century Apollonius were so famous, and so similar to those of Jesus, that early opponents of Christianity used Apollonius' accomplishments to argue that Jesus was neither original nor divine. In the earlier synoptic gospels – Mark, Matthew, and Luke – Jesus refuses to use miraculous signs to prove his authority, but the miracles in later gospel of John are performed to confirm his divinity. John's gospel adds miracle stories that appear to have been unknown to earlier gospel writers; for instance, he tells about Jesus turning water into wine, restoring an invalid to wholeness, healing of a man who had been blind since birth, and raising Lazarus from the dead. To be considered a divine wise man during this time in history, the populous expected miracles and other wondrous acts to prove divinity. Some of the miracles of Jesus are similar to some of Buddha's: Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee; Buddha crossed the River Ganges without a boat. Jesus by a word or the touch of his hand healed the sick; Buddha healed a sick woman by a single look. Jesus fed five thousand on five loaves and two small fishes; Buddha fed five hundred with no previous supplies. The similarities make me wonder: Did Jesus' miraculous acts really happen or were they attempts by the early Christian community to prove Jesus' divinity? Personally, I think Jesus would be amazed and even disturbed to hear the miraculous things he supposedly did during his life.

# Open Our Eyes

## The Words of Holy Scripture

### A Reading of Scripture from Ephesians 5:8-14

Once you were darkness, but now in God you are light. Live as children of light - for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to God. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

**One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.**

**Many: Thanks be to God.**

## The Gospel Lesson

### One: The Holy Gospel according to John 9:1-30

**Many: Glory to you, O Christ.**

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone

like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." They did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes."

**One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.**

**Many: Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Homily, "Miracles & Mysteries," Pamela Chappell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycxQFZONx0w>

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Reverend Pamela Chappell was an educator for more than three decades, after which she studied metaphysics, was ordained, and earned her doctorate, both from the University of Metaphysics in Sedona, Arizona. A lifelong singer/songwriter, she has produced six CDs and written two books. She sings and is a guest speaker for a variety of situations, including churches, retreats and other spiritual events and musical venues. She lives in South Haven with her husband, Pete Wehle.

### Doxology

***Grateful for the life you give us, thankful for your Holy Son,***

***Joyful in your Spirit flowing over all O God of Love.***

***Grateful for the bread of heaven, thankful for your holy word,***

***Joyful in your mercy flowing, we will praise you.***

### Celebration of Holy Communion

**One: God be with you.**

**Many: And also with you.**

**One: Lift up your hearts.**

**Many: We lift them up to God.**

**One: Let us give thanks to God.**

**Many: It is good to give God thanks and praise.**

And now we prepare the gifts of bread and wine in Holy Communion with our unseen, but fully felt congregation.

In the United Church of Christ, we say, “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, please know that you are invited, welcome, and worthy to receive these gifts.” And, so, with great joy, let us join our voices together and sing:

### **Creation’s Praise**

***Santo, santo, santo, mi corazon te adora.***

***Mi corazon te sabe decir, santo eres Dios.***

***Holy, holy, holy, my heart, my heart adores you.***

***My heart is glad to say the words, you are holy God.***

*(Take a section of the communion bread in your hands and say:)*

At the last meal that Jesus shared with his friends, he took some bread, and he said, “Thank you” to God for it. As he broke the bread, Jesus said to his friends, “This bread is my body. Whenever you eat it, remember me.”

*(Hold the section of the bread up high for a moment after you say this.)*

*(Then, hold your juice or wine, and say...)*

Then, Jesus took some wine. Again, he expressed his gratitude to God for it. And, as he passed the wine to his friends, he said to them: “This is my blood. Whenever you drink it, remember me.”

*(Hold the cup up high for a moment after you say this. Then, place both your hands over the bread and wine and say...)*

And, so, we call upon the Holy Spirit to bless these gifts of bread and wine, and to

bles all those who approach this table to receive these gifts this morning, that they may recognize that the Presence and the Power of the Christ dwells with them and within them.

### **Breaking of Bread**

***Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord,  
broken and shared, life for the world.***

***Let us be wine, love freely poured.***

***Let us be one with the Lord.***

Say: I receive the Bread of Life.

(Eat.)

Say: I receive the Cup of Love, the Drink of Compassion.

(Drink.)

(See your normal place in the congregation. See yourself holding the hands, and all the hands, holding hands. linking us all together. Breathe that in for a minute. And then say...)

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving & the Lord's Prayer**

**Our Mother/Father, always and everywhere, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

## Hymn of Sending, "Change Our Hearts"

*Piano and video graphics by Peter Black*

<https://youtu.be/oGo9hvAzecU>

## Benediction

Our worship this morning has come to a close, but now our service in the world continues. So, let us go forth to live fully, to love wastefully, and to have the courage to be all that God has created us to be. We are a grateful people, and so it is.

**Amen.**

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**Pastor: Rev. Salvatore Sapienza, [pastor@douglasucc.org](mailto:pastor@douglasucc.org)**

**Pianist/Director of Music: Peter Black**

**Administrative Assistant: Julie Ridl, [julie@douglasucc.org](mailto:julie@douglasucc.org)**

**We are so glad you have joined us today. Please feel free to ask any questions and participate or not in any parts of our worship service as you desire. We would love to hear from you and welcome you. Please feel free to connect with us using either email address above.**

**Please Join us after the service in our Zoom Friendship Hall by clicking on this link: <https://zoom.us/j/953967901>**

**We hope you have a wonderful experience and will want to return!**

## Our Mission

To grow together spiritually as progressive Christians, welcoming all; pursuing peace, justice, love, and healing for all creation. We demonstrate this by:

- Being Open and Affirming
- Acting as a Creation Justice Church
- Respecting and understanding all belief and faith traditions
- Recognizing and celebrating our connectedness to all peoples
- Valuing questions rather than answers.

## Happy Birthdays and Anniversaries

March -22, Tim Schwartz, 25-Meridith Ridl, 26-Michael Bojko, Bill Underdown

## Prayer List -- For Healing, Wholeness, Peace

Marcia Sullivan, Jeff Cooley, Len Lynch, The Boston/Austin family, especially Jason, Mike, and Kathy, Curtis Coffin, Ann Hopkins, Drew Carter, Richard Graham, Elaine Overweg, Bertha Fonseca, Garth & Myra (Mary Nyhof's Parents).

All in the military and their families. All who are homeless or addicted or abused or neglected or rejected or hungry; The UCC; the Grand West Association; our Church Council; our Stephen Ministers; our church committees; our communities, our schools, our nation and our planet.

To add/remove a name from the Prayer List, please [email julie@douglasucc.org](mailto:email.julie@douglasucc.org).

## Financial Stewardship Report, March 22

Collections by mail: \$0, Online Giving: \$2424.41, **Total: \$2424.41**

## Thank you!!

Your generous giving allows us to sustain our church community and our mission of service. At this time, without our in-service collections, **our church especially needs you to consider giving online**, which is easily done by clicking here to our website: [www.douglasucc.org/giving](http://www.douglasucc.org/giving)

**Or you may send checks by mail to:**

**Douglas Congregational United Church of Christ**

**56 Wall Street, PO Box 519**

**Douglas, MI 49406**

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