



"A Community Of Many Faithing Communities Where All Belong!"

Living Waters Contemplative Life Center | Divine Intervention Ministry to the Homeless
Tippecanoe just.good.food Garden | Food Justice Site PCUSA
Arts and Science Literacy Camps for Children

Welcome To Worship

March 26, 2023

9:30 a.m.

5th Sunday in Lent



Welcome to this time of being with God and each other.

"New Life in the Wilderness" Rev. Trish Eckert

✧ **Prelude: Zo Trembley**

✧ **Welcome and community news**

This afternoon, a group of us are joining the Common Ground rally to support residents in public housing whose living conditions are unacceptable. We're advocating for safe and healthy homes and working to bring accountability to the Housing Authority. You're welcome to join us! 3 pm - 4:30 pm (Come Early - Doors Open at 2:30 pm) at Mount Mary University, Bergstrom Hall, Alumnae Dining Room 2927 N 92nd Street, Milwaukee

We invite you to two other Tippe worship opportunities, both of which are on Zoom:

- **6 pm Sundays ~ Centering Prayer**
- **6:30 pm Mondays ~ Sanctuary Time of Belonging**

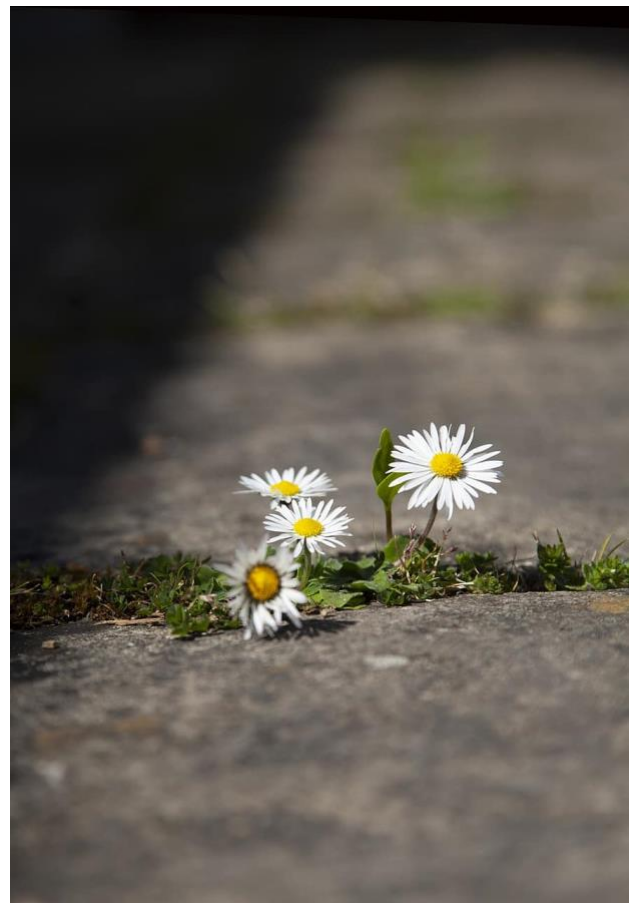
I'm seeking a few more readers for a special worship service for next week's Palm Sunday morning service, please let me know if you're interested.

✧ **Readying Ourselves for Worship**

Surely God is in this place, Holy Ground!
Surely God is in this place,
Holy Ground!

✧ **A Blessing as we Center Ourselves in this Moment**

*~ The Wilderness is a Place
of New Life – Resilient Life*



I used to think the wilderness would never end.
I called my mom and asked –
“Does time really heal all wounds?
Do the pieces ever fall back into place?
Does the wilderness go on forever?”



So she told me about the horizon.
She said, “There is an edge,
Where the earth meets the sky.
And when you’re there,
You will see daisies in the sidewalk
And the sun after the rain.”

I asked her to draw me a map
And she cried,
Because she knew this road was mine to walk,
But she promised to wait for me,
Day in and day out,
For as long as the wilderness raged.

So I walked.
And it felt like forty days and it hurt
like forty nights.
And I waved to the people I passed there
in the wilderness.
We tipped our hats to one another,
Silently recognizing the weight we
each carried,

Until one day, I realized—
The earth always kisses the sky.
And this wilderness has turned into a garden,
And I have made it out alive.

And my mother hugged me,
There at the earth’s edge.
And she whispered in my ear,
That God was that gardener,
And that I had nothing to fear.

So if you ever ask for a map,
Know that God and I will be planting seeds,
Hoping to turn your wilderness into a garden.

For as long as the wilderness rages on,
I will never stop looking for you
Where the earth kisses the sky.
Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

✧ **Becoming Present to God and Each Other - Our Check-in**

~ **The Joy of Passing the Peace** ~

One: May the peace that surpasses all understanding be with you

All: And also with you

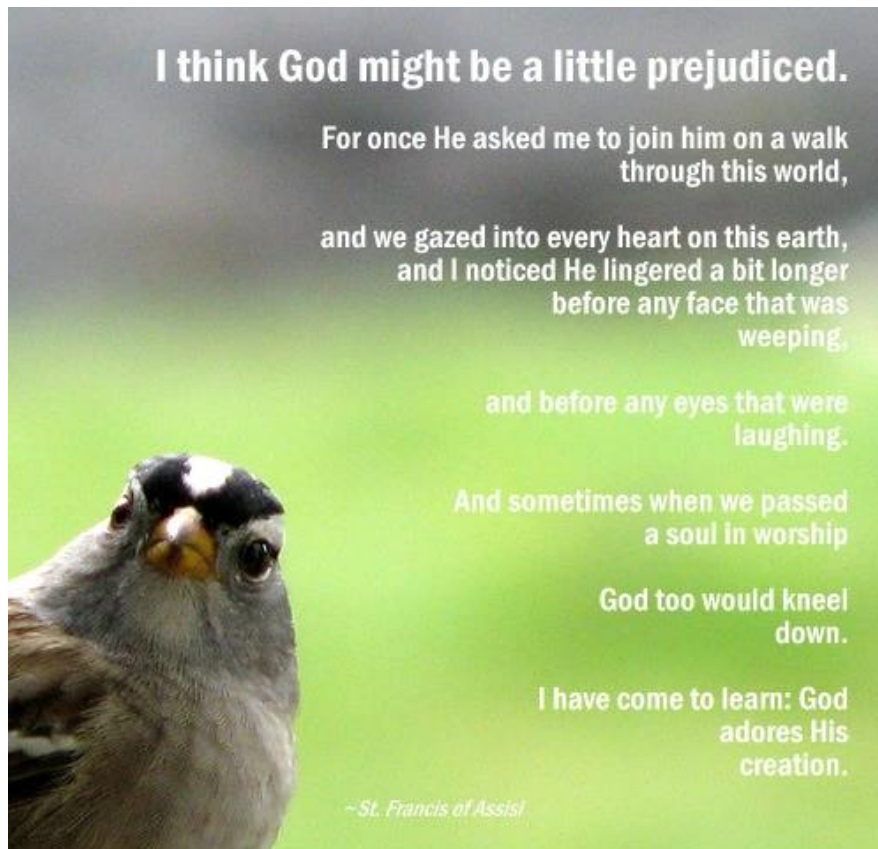
One: Thanks be to God

✧ Kid's Time

✧ Gathering as God's People: Wilderness in this Season of Lent

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God's love.

The other day I came across a beautiful reflection regarding the poem entitled, "God Would Kneel Down" by St. Francis of Assisi. What struck me about this poem was how reverently St. Francis speaks of both God and humanity.



Reverend Lauren Wright Pittman, one of the founding creative partners of "A Sanctified Art," which has provided much of the worship material we are using for Lent this year, wrote a reflection considering this poem. She wrote, "Spiritual wilderness is often defined by an apparent distance from God or God's absence all together. It is a place where we grieve, making our home out of despair and crushed dreams."

"It is where we thrash our bodies about in protest of the harshness of this world and are pushed to our edges, challenged beyond what we thought possible. For me, the bounds

of wilderness were marked with the utter, lonely betrayal of God's absence. As I heard the words of St. Francis, however, the wilderness transformed, and I saw the form of God's also weary body kneeling down beside me as I lay in the dust of my own loss, trauma, and fear. The wilderness is not a place where God abandons us, though we may keep our own distance for a while. It is where God fiercely holds us while everything else dissolves around us. When we find ourselves lying on the blistering, rough ground, God kneels down beside us and adores us. This is the new image of wilderness I carry with me."

In this fifth week of Lent, let's turn our attention to these truths of wilderness:

The wilderness generates life in unexpected places

The wilderness is a place of new life - resilient life

Grief is a wilderness

Death is inevitable in the wilderness

Wilderness can be a place of exile

✧ **Gathering Hymn 819 *Be Still, My Soul***

✧ **Opening Ourselves to God's Grace**

One: We have been in the wilderness—

All: Discerning and working, seeking and dreaming.

One: We have been in the wilderness—

All: Grieving and wondering, praying and hoping.

One: We have been in the wilderness—

All: Longing and running, creating and waiting.

One: We have been in the wilderness, but we have not been alone; for God walks with us, every step of the way.

All: So let us worship the God of our darkest nights and our brightest days.

One: Let us worship together.



✧ **Sharing our Innermost Lives with God**

Gracious God, You invite us to plant a garden of love and harmony, but we grow weeds of prejudice and hatred. You invite us to sow joy and gratitude, but we scatter seeds of greed and envy. You call us to tend the soil of fear and denial, but instead, we close our eyes and let the earth suffer. Forgive us. You invited us to plant a garden, and we lost ourselves in the wilderness. Clear our hearts. Breathe life into these weary bones and grant us a fresh start. Gratefully we pray, amen.

✧ **Special Music *Wake Up, Rise Up*** by Guru Singh played by Rosie Rain

✧ **Prayer of Intention**

✧ **Bible Wisdom Teachings**

Ezekiel 37: 1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up

from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD.

John 11: 32-45

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep.

So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

One: May we hear anew the origin stories of our faith and draw from the roots of our tradition.

All: Thanks be to our God.

✧**Message "New Life in the Wilderness"**



✧ **Reflection Questions**

In your daily living, what patterns are life-giving and help you notice the presence of God? Which habits keep you bound? What helps you hear the voice of Christ who stands at the threshold between death and life? What will help you choose to come forth, and to help someone else do the same? Are there people who can help with the unbinding?



✧ **Short period of silent reflection**

✧ **Sharing Our Wisdom**

✧ **Hymn 286 *Breathe on me, Breath of God***

✧ **Community Prayers & the Pastoral Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer

All: God, heart of the world: revealed through every aspect of creation, understood through our awareness. May we honor the holiness of creation and act accordingly so that your love is reflected in the way we live. May we always be thankful for the food we eat and the friends we have. May we forgive those who transgress against us and be forgiven for our own. In the freedom of love may we live as your heartbeat and not be compromised by hesitation. Through our freedom, may your justice be seen and heard and experienced forever and ever. Amen. (Sherri J. Weinberg)

✧Benediction

May all here find blessing in their lives,
hope in their days, and comfort in their nights.
Let us go now, in peace. Amen.

Now that the worship has ended, may the service truly begin.

✧Our Response:

Holy One, now we your servants go in peace. Your Word lives on in us.

✧Postlude Zo Trembley

