



## Fourth Sunday in Lent

*We extend love and extravagant welcome  
to all of God's children without judgment,  
no matter who they are or  
where they are on life's journey.*

March 27, 2022

### Welcome!

Masks are required and must always cover nose and mouth.  
Contact tracing information is requested to contain virus transmission.  
Please extend a respectful courtesy by silencing your cell phone.  
Assistive listening devices are at the Welcome Table in the back.  
Offering plates are in the front and rear of the Church.

### Gathering Music & Lighting Candles (10:20a)

Steve Milloy, piano; Bennett Draper, Acolyte

"I Will Celebrate" -*Rita Baloche, arr. Carol Tornquist*

"My Shepherd Will Supply My Need" -*arr. Mark Hayes*

"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" -*Spiritual, arr. Mark Hayes*

### Centering Prayer

*God of all hope, we know all too well a world of betrayal, despair, exclusion, and conflict. May we live into your alternative world of truth, hope, welcome, and harmony as we trust and follow you. Amen.*

### Greeting and Call to Worship (10:30a)

Keith M. Haithcock

One: We have gathered in the presence of God our creator, who sets before us the ways of life and death.

**All: We have gathered in the presence of Jesus the Christ, who calls us to accept the cost of discipleship that we may know its joy.**

One: We have gathered in the presence of the Spirit, who sustains us in trial and rejoicing.

**All: In our living and in our dying, we belong to God. In the shadow of God's wings, we sing for joy. Let us worship God.**

## Introit

“Pero Queda Cristo”  
(My Soul Overflows with Praise)

Jennie Malone, vocal

At early dawn we sing a song of adoration  
to God who is our only hope and our salvation.  
At early dawn we raise our longing invocation;  
For God’s sweet calm we beg in fervent supplication.

God’s heart is full of love and mercy for us,  
From all our brokenness God will restore us.  
Our God is strong and will forsake us never,  
From death itself God sets us free forever.

## Opening Our Heart

One: Let us open our hearts to God.

(Silence is kept.)

**All: Loving God, we own up to the mark that you have given us to live by.  
You come to us in Jesus, revealing your love for all people  
and suffering pain for us;  
still we do not turn in love and obedience to you.**

**We do that which we ought not to do,  
and we leave undone those things we ought to do.  
Aimless and rebellious as we are,  
we cannot trust in ourselves;  
we can trust only in your grace.**

**Speak the word, O God,  
and we shall be made free.  
Forgive us, receive us,  
and give us courage to serve you  
with renewed hearts and wills. Amen.**

## Assurance of Grace

One: Be assured, in the name of Jesus Christ:

**All: Our sins are forgiven.  
Our faith and God’s love has made us free.  
In Christ we are a new creation. Thanks be to God!**

## Opening Hymn

“Come, O Fount of Every Blessing”

Jennie Malone, vocal

Come, O fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing your grace;  
streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of endless praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it, mount of God's unfailing love.

Here I pause in my sojourning, giving thanks for having come,  
come to trust, at every turning, God will guide me safely home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God,  
Came to rescue me from danger, blessed body, precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor daily I am drawn anew!  
Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to you.  
Prone to wander, I can feel it, wander from the love I've known:  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for your very own.

## Community Prayer and The Prayer Jesus Teaches

One: In peace let us pray to God saying, Gracious One, have mercy.

For the church throughout the world, that all Christians may embody the reconciling love of Christ, let us pray to God,

**All: Gracious One, have mercy.**

One: For the nations of the world and its leaders, that all may dwell in peace and that justice may be tempered by mercy, let us pray to God,

**All: Gracious One, have mercy.**

One: For the planet Earth, God's gift to humanity, that all may share wisely its resources and conserve its riches for one another, let us pray to God,

**All: Gracious One, have mercy.**

One: For our enemies, that we may regard them with the reconciling love made manifest in Christ, let us pray to God,

**All: Gracious One, have mercy.**

One: For those who are sick or in trouble, for those who are defenseless, weak, and poor, that they may be restored to wholeness of life, let us pray to God,

**All: Gracious One, have mercy.**

One: For the lost, for those who have abandoned God, friends, or family, and for those who have never known such love, that they may come to know the joy of love's embrace, let us pray to God,

**All: Gracious One, have mercy.**

One: You, Loving God, do not ignore our pleas but rather you lift us up and carry us through the valleys and lead us to the mountains of life, and so together with one voice we pray the words Jesus teaches us, saying...

**ALL: Great Giver, in whom heaven is found, holy is your name.**

**May your commonwealth of peace and freedom flourish on earth.**

**Give us this day bread for our journey and make us hungry to see the whole world nourished.**

**Forgive us and help us forgive one another.**

**Strengthen us for the challenges that lie ahead.**

**Let us hear your prophets and deliver us from our privilege.**

**For your love is the only power, the only home, the only honor we need in the world and in the world to come. Amen.**

### **Luke 15.1-32** (Rise in body or spirit.)

Jeff Draper

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the tax collectors and the “sinners” were all gathering around Jesus to listen to his teaching, <sup>2</sup> at which the Pharisees and the religious scholars murmured, “This person welcomes sinners and eats with them!”

<sup>3</sup> Jesus then addressed this parable to them: <sup>4</sup> “Who among you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, doesn’t leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and search for the lost one until it’s found? <sup>5</sup> And finding it, you put the sheep on your shoulders in jubilation. <sup>6</sup> Once home, you invite friends and neighbors in and say to them, ‘Rejoice with me! I’ve found my lost sheep!’ <sup>7</sup> I tell you, in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent. <sup>8</sup> ”What householder, who has ten silver pieces and loses one, doesn’t light a lamp and sweep the house in a diligent search until she finds what she had lost? <sup>9</sup> And when it is found, the householder calls in her friends and neighbors and says, ‘Rejoice with me! I’ve found the silver piece I lost!’

<sup>10</sup> I tell you, there will be the same kind of joy before the angels of God over one repentant sinner.”

<sup>11</sup> He added, “A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to their father, ‘Give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.’ So the father divided up the property between them. <sup>13</sup> Some days later, the younger son gathered up his belongings and went off to a distant land. Here he squandered all his money on loose living.

<sup>14</sup> After everything was spent, a great famine broke out in the land, and the son was in great need. <sup>15</sup> So he went to a landowner, who sent him to a farm to take care of the pigs. <sup>16</sup> The son was so hungry that he could have eaten the husks that were

fodder for the pigs, but no one made a move to give him anything. <sup>17</sup> Coming to his senses at last, he said, ‘How many hired hands at my father’s house have more than enough to eat, while here I am starving! <sup>18</sup> I’ll quit and go back home and say, “I’ve sinned against God and against you; <sup>19</sup> I no longer deserve to be called one of your children. Treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ <sup>20</sup> With that, the younger son set off for home.

“While still a long way off, the father caught sight of the returning child and was deeply moved. The father ran out to meet him, threw his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> The son said to him, ‘I’ve sinned against God and against you; I no longer deserve to be called one of your children.’ <sup>22</sup> But his father said to one of the workers, ‘Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Take the calf we’ve been fattening and butcher it. Let’s eat and celebrate! <sup>24</sup> This son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and now he’s found!’ And the celebration began.

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile the elder son had been out in the field. As he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the workers and asked what was happening. <sup>27</sup> The worker answered, ‘Your brother is home, and the fatted calf has been killed because your father has him back safe and sound.’

<sup>28</sup> “The son got angry at this and refused to go in to the party, but his father came out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> The older son replied, ‘Look! For years now I’ve done every single thing you asked me to do. I never disobeyed even one of your orders, yet you never gave me so much as a kid goat to celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But then this son of yours comes home after going through your money with prostitutes, and you kill the fatted calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup> “‘But my child!’ the father said. ‘You’re with me always, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we have to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and now he’s found.’ “

One: Here ends the reading inspired by God.

May God grant to us wisdom and courage for interpretation.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

## Sermon

*“JESUS’ STORY: A PARENT AND TWO SIBLINGS”*

Keith M. Haithcock

## Ministry of Music

Jennie Malone, vocal

*“Come to the Table” -Ben McDonald, Ben Glover, & Dave Frey*

## Ignite Moment

Sue Jelinek

*Open and Affirming – Quarter 2: Engagement Introduction*

## **An Invitation to Share our Gifts** -Mathew 5.14-16

Jeff Draper

One: "You are the light of the world. You don't build a city on a hill, then try to hide it, do you?"

**All: No!**

One: You don't light a lamp, then put it under a bushel basket, do you?

**All: No!**

One: No, you set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before others so that they may see your good acts and give praise to your God in heaven."

**All: May it be so!**

One: Offering plates are available at both the front and back of the Sanctuary. You may place your offering there as you leave. May God bless you as you give your gifts generously to continue this ministry of justice, diversity, and inclusion, a beacon of hope and inspiration.

## **Unison Blessing of our Gifts**

**God, we present these offerings that they may be used to extend your liberating reign. With them, we offer our varied ministries in the days ahead that each of us may be part of your answer to the cries of the world. Amen**

**(Masks remain on and all may sing together.)**

**Parting Song, 547** (Rise in body or spirit.)

"Amazing Grace"

**Send Out** (Rise in body or spirit.)

Keith M. Haithcock

**Going Forth Music**

Steve Milloy, piano

*"Ain-a That Good News" -Spiritual, arr. John Carter*

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## **Sermon Questions to Ponder During Lent and Eastertide:**

1. In this Lenten season, in what ways do we feel alienated from all that is going on around us, perhaps even from those we hold most dear?
2. How might we have contributed to that sense of alienation?
3. If Lent is a time of repentance, of turning back, how can we find our way back home again?
4. We all know that Lent leads to Easter; what is the resurrection we long for in this season?

5. Where are the dead places, the lifeless experiences, the heavy burdens that block our new life?
6. Are there people that we feel tempted to find deserving of their fate?
7. Are there people who do not “deserve” forgiveness quite so easily?
8. What about people whose behaviors have been destructive of others? How do we wrestle with the reality of reconciliation with them, and how do we welcome home those who may be desperate but not yet truly sorry?  
Do we include ourselves and our own clumsy attempts to repent and to reconcile?

## **Stay Connected at St. John Church!**

For more information about St. John Church go to: [www.StJohnChurch.net](http://www.StJohnChurch.net).

To receive *The e-Weekly* or Prayer List, email [Office@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Office@StJohnChurch.net).

To meet with the Pastor call: 859.261.2066, ext.202; email [Pastor@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Pastor@StJohnChurch.net).

To make a prayer request for the Prayer List, email [PrayerList@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:PrayerList@StJohnChurch.net).

No online connection? Call the office at 859.261.2066, ext. 201.

Office hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10:00am to 4:00pm.

## **Contact Tracing Information**

In an effort to keep everyone healthy, contact the Church office at 859.261.2066 ext. 201 or [Office@StJohnChurch.net](mailto:Office@StJohnChurch.net) if you are diagnosed with COVID after this service.

### **IGNITE 2022**

### **Justice – Diversity – Inclusion**

### **Anti-Racism - Accessible to All - Open and Affirming**



**Ignite 2022** is an initiative grounded in justice, diversity, and inclusion to extend love and extravagant welcome to all of God’s children without judgment, no matter who they are or where they are on life’s journey. Everyone is invited and encouraged to engage in this effort to transform St. John Church in service to Christ.

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United Church of Christ Office for Church Life and Leadership, p. 491-492; **Opening Hymn** “Come, O Fount of Every Blessing” from *The New Century Hymnal*, © 1995 The Pilgrim Press (p. 459); **The Prayer Jesus Teaches** by Parker Palmer, from Claremont United Church of Christ, Claremont, CA; **Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32** from *The Inclusive Bible* © 2007 by *Priests for Equality*; **An Invitation to Share our Gifts** Matthew 5.14-16 from *The Inclusive Bible* © 2007 by *Priests for Equality*; **Unison Blessing of Our Gifts** from the *Book of Worship* © 1986 United Church of Christ

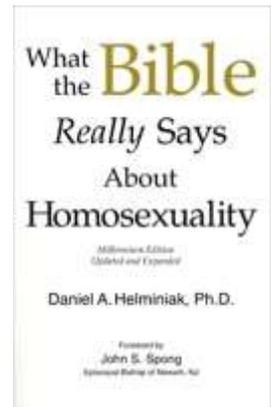
Office for Church Life and Leadership, p. 551-H.



## Ignite 2022 Second Quarter – Engage! Open and Affirming (ONA)

The Open and Affirming Team of Ignite 2022 invites you and your family and friends to engage what the Bible really has to say about homosexuality and engage Lighthouse Family Services to learn about and experience their LGBTQI+ homeless youth program and how St. John Church can be supportive of their work.

There will be four discussion sessions using the book, What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality, by Daniel Helminiak. This small volume is packed with insight about how we might better understand the “clobber” passages of the Bible frequently used to condemn LGBTQI+ people. Helminiak offers the opportunity to engage with these sacred texts in new ways integrating faith, spirituality, religion and psychology.



### Zoom Discussion sessions:

**Thursdays April 21, 28, May 5, 12 - 6:30p to 7:30p.**

**Register for Zoom sessions at the ONA table in the rear of the Sanctuary.**

An online link to register is coming soon.

Books are available at no charge at the ONA table.



In addition, we will be engaging Lighthouse Youth & Family Services in Cincinnati. An organization that the Pastor’s Discretionary Assistance Fund of St. John Church supports its housing and food programs.

Lighthouse provides a wide range of support for families, children and youth around a variety of issues, including homelessness, education, foster care and adoption, outpatient mental health and resources for LGBTQI+ youth. LGBTQI+ youth are dramatically over-represented in the homeless youth population. We will be learning more about what Lighthouse Youth & Family Services offers and meeting some of their leaders. The date for this engagement is to be determined soon.

**“Open and Affirming” is a United Church of Christ designation for congregations who intentionally welcome and embrace persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, plus.**