

February 21, 2021

First Sunday in Lent



St. John United Church of Christ

10207 Lincoln Trail

Fairview Heights, IL 62208

Telephone 397-6323

Secretary – Judy Hartman

Rev. Rosemary Captain

Prayers and Liturgy by

Rev. Rosemary McCombs Maxey,

a citizen of the

Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Genesis 9:8-17 Psalm 25:1-10

I Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:9-15

CALL TO WORSHIP: adapted from Ps 25, 1-3

To you, O GOD, we lift up the spirit of our whole selves.

**O God, we trust unashamedly in you;
seeking that you be not ashamed of us;**

May we begin our Lenten journey together in right relationships;

**Teach us. Show us. Guide us in your paths. Grow us
to know your ways more clearly.**

You are the God of our salvation and the Sustainer of good relations.

For you we wait.

May integrity, a clean conscience, and upright living preserve us.

Amen.

INVOCATION:

As in days of old, Creator God,
we come to look for your signs of covenant promises.

Like the rainbow days of Noah,

we see and know your signs

and hear your voice again

directing us to places

of preparation and transformation

in our lives and in our world.

Thank you God, for your covenant signs

in this season of Lent. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Sisters and Brothers, in our daily lives we need the gift of the season of Lent. These 40 days can help us restore right relationships with God and with others. This is a fine time to focus, clear our hearts and minds of distractions, and re-orient and restore our whole selves. May God be with us. Let us pray:

PRAAYER OF CONFESSION:

Creating and Renewing God.
In this Lenten season we each need the opportunity to clear our eyes of the glaze of indifference and apathy.
Help us get our minds off distractions, obsessions and self-pity so that we don't feel helpless.
Help us to start over. Re-orient head and heart so that we may fill our whole selves with life-affirming activities and thoughts.
(Silence for personal confession)

May I be in right relationship with you and all your creation and join the United Church of Christ in over-coming violence, hunger, and injustice.
May I find courage and clarity to assist me in works of justice and compassion which make daily life bearable for many.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S STEADFASTNESS:

Brothers and Sisters,
God hears our prayers and, even in our human frailty, promises to be with us in the wilderness times. Observe, find comfort, and offer with courage to restore and build relationships among God's people.
Experience a new and renewed sense of hope. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE: Mark 1:9-15

⁹ About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. ¹¹ And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness."
¹² At once the Spirit forced Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among the wild animals, and the angels took care of him.
¹⁴ After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, ¹⁵ saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!"





MESSAGE: "Now is the Time"

Mark's Gospel is known for being brief and right to the point. In just a few verses, he covers Jesus' baptism, trial in the wilderness, and the beginning of his ministry. It's as if Mark is in a hurry.

In these few verses, Mark gives us the readers much to think about. We are amazed that a voice, presumably God's, spoke to tell us who this man from Nazareth truly is; God claims him as God's son.

We are bewildered at why the Spirit would force Jesus out into the wilderness for 40 days. Jesus was tempted by Satan but the angels provided for him. And then Jesus begins his ministry by announcing God's good news, saying, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and live, and trust this good news." I hear the urgency in these words. Jesus also sounds like he is in a hurry. I'm out of breath just reading what Jesus said.

Jesus' message to us could be, "Don't miss your chance! Get with the program! You have exactly 40 days in Lent to change your hearts and live. Don't let Satan tempt you to die to sin. Leave the wilderness. You can live and have new life in the love and grace Jesus offers us. The angels will lead you out of harm's way into the arms of Jesus.

"You can have joy as you help others. You can have peace when you change your hearts knowing that Jesus has come to save you from your old, destructive way of living. Stop hurting ourselves and others.

"Stop being tempted by the things of this world and trust Jesus to bring you to a better world; his world. A world where everyone is loved; where no one is left behind unless they choose not to join Jesus." What is this new world? It's the KINGDOM OF GOD.

HURRY before it's too late! Don't miss out on this chance of a life time. Rush to Jesus. He has room for you. Don't keep him waiting! Amen.

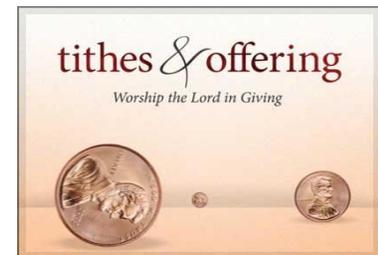


SILENT PERSONAL PRAYERS:

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

CALL TO OFFERING:

Psalm 25:10 reminds us, "All the paths of God are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who keep God's covenant and



decrees.”

Our church’s ministries are extensions of God’s love and faithfulness made possible through the generous giving of our time, energy, and money.

With love let us continue to offer our gifts to God.

DEDICATION:

God of all bounty and blessing, receive our lives and our gifts to be bounty and blessings to you, our church, and the world. Amen.

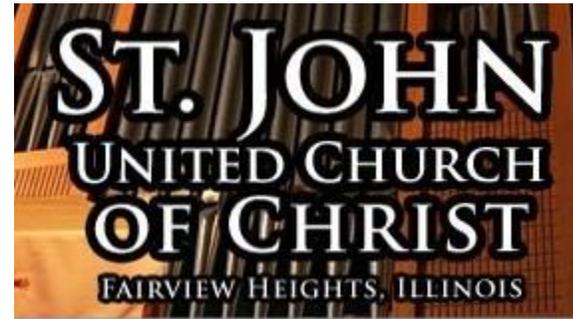
BENEDICTION:

Mindful of your mercy, forgiveness, and instruction, O God, we go into the world renewed, refreshed, and full of courage to be your people.

We go in peace to work for justice. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: We pray for the health and well-being of all affected by the pandemic and we especially pray for: Urban Baum, Rich Schmitt, Donna Isselhard, Shari Hamilton, Becky Ballard, P.J. Bennett.

**If all goes well,
we will restart in-person worship on March 7
at 10 am. Masks will still be required
plus sitting 6 feet apart. Still no singing.**



A prayer written by Rev. Adam Hamilton:

Lord, help me be the disciple you want me to be. Help me answer your call to be brave and to climb out of the boat, to leave my comfort zone, to walk with you. When I am beset by storms and sinking take my hand and rescue me. Climb into my boat and calm the wind and the waves. In your holy name. Amen.

I pray you are all safe and warm in your “igloos”, waiting for the snow and cold weather to leave us. God, bring on spring. We are certainly ready.
Peace, Pastor Rosemary