



*"Dust"* by Mike Moyers.

# **Christ Church** UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Dan Stark, Pastor  
Organist and Pianist, Pam Kothrade  
Nancy Charles, Song Leader

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February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021

This weekend we observe the first Sunday of Lent and we begin our sermon series, *Again and Again*. In Lent, we're reminded that, again and again, suffering and brokenness find us. We doubt again, we lament again, we mess up again. Again and again, the story of Jesus on the cross repeats – every time lives are taken unjustly, every time the powerful choose corruption and violence, every time individuals forget how to love. Again and again, God breaks the cycle and offers us a new way forward. As Lent begins, we're invited in once again to community, to this season, to our own spiritual journey, to true transformation. In our Gospel lesson from Mark, God meets Jesus at the water before he is tempted in the wilderness. God claims Jesus as God's Beloved before he begins his journey to the cross. God also meets us at the water's edge of our lives, at the threshold of something new, and names us as Beloved. God's covenant with creation reminds us that God meets us where we are – in the midst of our doubt, reluctance, or weariness – and proclaims we are good. *Again, and Again, God Meets Us*.

*\*Please recite the PURPLE words aloud.*

## **Prelude**

## **Words of Welcome**

## **Opening Song**

## **Opening Litany**

**Sarah Are**

One: God meets us in the night –

**All: Before the sun rises,  
Before the wound heals,  
Before there are answers,  
Before there is closure.**

One: God meets us in the light –

**All: Where joy is effervescent,  
Where laughter is contagious,  
Where flowers bloom from cracks in the sidewalk,  
And where people gather around the table.**

One: God meets us at the threshold –

**All: At the edge of the water,  
At the beginning of the wilderness,  
At the start of something new,  
On the edge of faith.**

One: And if God meets us in all those places,  
Then surely God meets us in between –

**All: Staying with us through the wilderness.**

One: We are not alone. God is all around.

**All: Let us worship the God of the here and now.**

## **Opening Prayer**

*Holy God,  
If I am honest, faith often feels like water in my hands.  
No matter how hard I try to hold onto it, some of it always slips through –  
Like droplets of truth running down my wrists, back toward my heart.  
This human inability to hold onto you leaves me thirsty for more.  
So, as we prepare to read scripture,  
I pray that once again, you would meet us here.  
Meet us in our hope and our heartache.  
Meet us in our fear and our joy,  
Meet us in our cupped hands and clenched fists.  
And even if the water keeps running,  
And we do not have a sky-parting moment of clarity,  
Or a tangible sense that you are near;  
Even if we do not hear the words, “This is my beloved,”  
Ringing in our ears,  
We will trust that you are near,  
Always and forever meeting us here,  
Running toward our hearts.  
Gratefully we pray,  
Amen.*

## **Old Testament**

[Genesis 9:8-17](#)

A covenant is a promise of mutual accountability. God’s “covenants” with humankind for the first time after the Great Flood in Genesis 9. This promise is not just for humanity, but for all creation. God promises never to again destroy the earth with a flood. God hangs God’s bow, the rainbow, in the sky – and will never gain use it against the earth. In ancient Mesopotamian mythology, people believed that ancient deities went to war with people. The God revealed to Noah was unique, because God made a covenant and promised never again to make a war with the earth with floods.

## **New Testament**

[Mark 1:9-15](#)

In just seven verses, Mark tells us about three significant events in the life of Jesus as he began his ministry. We hear about Jesus’ baptism, where he is named and claimed as God’s Beloved. The same Spirit that descends upon him also drives him into the wilderness. We hear about Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness by the Adversary. Finally, after John the Baptist’s arrest, Jesus proclaims God’s closeness and reign while calling for repentance.

**Song of Response****Call to Confession**

*Again and again, God meets us where we are.*

*God's love knows no bounds, which is hard for us to understand and easy for us to forget.*

*Therefore, in confession we remember together that we are not alone.*

*And in a unified voice, we once again ask for God's grace in that holy reminder.*

*Family of faith, please pray with me.*

**Prayer of Confession**

One: God who meets us where we are—

There is nowhere we can go that you are not.

**All: You were with Jesus at his baptism.**

**You were with him in the wilderness,**

**And even in between, you were there,**

**Saying aloud, "This is my Beloved."**

One: We know that you are with us too—

In the good, the bad, and everything in between—

But so often we act like we are alone.

**All: Instead of coming to you with our hurt,**

**We hold it in or cast it onto others.**

Instead of coming to you with our joy,

We credit ourselves and offer you nothing.

One: How can we long for a deeper relationship with you

While living like you are nowhere to be found?

**All: Forgive our self-centered ways.**

**Remind us that in every breath, in every step, you are there.**

One: You are the God who meets us where we are.

**All: Before and behind, above and below, within and around. Amen.**

**Words of Forgiveness**

One: Family of faith, if you hear nothing else today, hear this:

God is here. God sees you. God knows you. God meets you at the edge of every new beginning, And God calls you Beloved.

**All: We are washed by the water.**

**We are called Beloved.**

**Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

**Prayers of the People**

*Hear Our Prayers, O God...*

**For health & healing:** *God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Ps. 147:3*

We pray for:

~Ian, husband of Molly Pufall Brown as he navigates the preliminary steps to receive treatments of chemotherapy every 2 weeks for 2 months for stage 2 Hodgkins lymphoma. Prayers also for Molly and their daughters during this difficult process. They are encouraged as this type of cancer has a 90% + success rate.

~Melissa Franco as she suffered a miscarriage at the end of last year and is greatly struggling with the loss. She is asking for prayers of peace and comfort, as she is dealing with feelings of depression.

~ Kim O'Brien as she is starting chemotherapy treatment next week.

"Thanks to everyone for their positive thoughts and prayers during her surgery. I will be taking my prayer shall to every chemo treatment so I can stay warm and be wrapped in the love I have from my church family." Kim O'Brien.

~Judy, niece of Ken Klockow as she is on chemo for breast cancer.

~Emily, her husband and 2 young children, Andy Oren's friend as she was just diagnosed with systemic scleroderma, a serious auto-immune disease.

~Ken Klockow as he deals with lower back pain and restrictions.

~Ken's sister who was moved to a nursing home and has a serious chronic infection and dementia.

~Susie Klockow's Aunt Evelyn who is in hospice and Aunt Eleanore who had a stroke and is in home hospice, also for her daughters and granddaughters who are taking care of her.

~David Rothe, choir friend of John Helt who has been at St. Luke's for the last two weeks, fighting a serious infection, discovered after a fall in his home.

~Sally, young friend of Andy Oren who is dealing with a cancerous tumor.

~Johnny, friend of the Klockows who has COVID and other health problems.

~Continued prayers for Jack and our niece, Dawn, and their three children as Jack continues chemo treatments. They are grateful that he is home, but now he has to be driven twice a day to the hospital for chemo. Prayers of thanksgiving that he is home and prayers for healing. From Dick & Joan Gaeth.

~Bill Kroening as he receives radiation treatments.

~Bob Kroening as he receives chemo drug treatments.

~Joe and Laurie, son in law and daughter of Jackie Struck. Prayers for continued healing for wounds as he goes to wound care.

~Nick Miller, nephew of Nancy & Brad Charles who has started using heroin again. Prayers for the whole family.

~Dawn, daughter in-law of Laurel and wife of Brad Dayton, as she manages diabetes and dialysis 4 times per week.

~Tracy, daughter of Nancy Kaye, who is at home with Nancy awaiting liver and kidney transplants. She is doing well.

~Continued prayers for Julene Flanagan's nephew, who is struggling with mental health issues.

~Continued prayers for Julene Flanagan's family member who is struggling with health issues related to kidney disease.

~Dan, friend of Molly Pufall Brown, who is very sick and discouraged with an undiagnosed illness. Prayers also for his wife and 2 young children as the eldest child is being taken care of the grandma and his wife works full time and struggles to also take care of their youngest child.

~Kelley, friend of Nancy Charles as she receives radiation treatment for breast cancer.

~Bernee, friend of Nancy Kaye who has end-stage lung cancer and is in a nursing home in hospice.

### **Prayer Song**

#### **Call to Offering**

#### **UCC Worship Ways**

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 offer our gifts to God. Please give as you are able.

[www.uccmke.org/donate](http://www.uccmke.org/donate)

#### **Prayer of 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.*

#### **Doxology**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below**

**Praise God above ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.**

**A-men.**

#### **Lenten Poem**

#### **Remember When?**

**Sarah Are**

God never begins letters with the words,

"I hope this finds you well,"

For those words imply distance.

Instead, God begins God's letters to you with the words,

"Remember when?"

Beloved child,

Remember when we dipped our toes into the water?

Remember when we dove right in?

Remember when the ice cream dripped down our hands

And the cicadas sang their song,

And the seasons changed,

And the days were long?

Remember when we fell in love and the world was new?  
Remember when our heart was broken?  
Remember the tears?  
Remember the long nights?  
Remember when we laughed again and the sound surprised us?  
Remember when we marched in the street?  
Remember when we cast our vote?  
Remember when we believed in hope?  
Remember when?  
I do.

That's what God's letters say.  
So on this day, and every day to come,  
Remember: God is meeting you.  
If you look back, you might remember when.

### **Closing Song Lenten Charge**

*As you leave this space,  
May your mouth speak of God's goodness.  
May your arms hold those in need.  
May your feet walk toward justice.  
May your heart trust its worth.  
May your soul dance in God's grace.  
And may this be your rhythm –  
Again, and again and again,  
Until God's promised day.  
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself,  
Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace.  
Amen.*

### **Postlude**

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Some Prayers and Liturgies by UCC Worship Ways

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### **Happy Birthday to these wonderful people!**

Greg Mitchell February 22

Cyndi Kroening February 26

Chelsea Clark February 27

## Thanks

~Thanks to Brian O'Brien for setting up the outdoor Lenten crosses.

~Thanks to everyone who contributed to the success, fun and excitement of the Chinese "Dinners To Go" event! It was as much fun as you can have at a Pandemic church event. Special thanks to Emily, Dick & Joan for the show of such outstanding culinary skills.

From Paul & Doris Mayeshiba

~Thanks to Paul & Doris Mayeshiba for coming up with organizing and hosting such a wonderful and needed event, especially at this time. You brought joy to many people.

~Thanks to the Gaeths and everyone who helped to clean the kitchen, ovens and stoves in preparation for the dinner and how "spic and span" everything was left.

~We accept with appreciation and gratitude donations made in memory of Howard Fritsch from the Wicks, Simons, Pfeifers, Fritsches, and Sue Steinhauer.

## Announcements

Need: Friday night volunteers for SOS DI meal distribution

It would be helpful if we could get 2 more sets of Building Reps so that volunteers will repeat about every 6-8 weeks. Just 1.5 hours on a Friday evening starting at 4:45pm.

Please contact Jim Wick for information and/or to sign up. Thanks.

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If you should need to contact Pastor Stark, please email [pastor@uccmke.org](mailto:pastor@uccmke.org).  
Christ Church UCC, 915 East Oklahoma Ave, Milwaukee, WI, 53207.

We are currently worshipping online-only.

You can make your offering to Christ Church at [www.uccmke.org/donate](http://www.uccmke.org/donate) or by mailing a check to Christ Church, 915 East Oklahoma Ave, Milwaukee, WI, 53207.

