



ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**LENT WORSHIP @ HOME**  
**HOLY VESSELS:**  
**A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY**

[www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome](http://www.zionuccindy.net/worshipathome)

*Holy Vessels: A Season of Recovery*  
*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent – Stories*  
March 7, 2021

**PRELUDE**

*Given For You, Martha Main*

**GATHERING**—We continue our Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives.

*Lenten Anthem: “Holy Vessels”*  
*Vessels, holy and whole*  
*Broken, needing the One*  
*Open, body and soul*  
*Healer, come.*

Those who collect beach glass often become “archeologists”—seeking out any markings or clues as to the story of the original piece. It often takes much time to bring out the truth behind it. This week we acknowledge the power of truth-telling as a healing property. There are stories that have shaped our lives, leaving us without the ability to see who we truly are in the eyes of God and leaving us without the ability to speak the depth of our stories of struggle. We focus on the importance of recovery of mental health, reclaiming our sense of who we are and being able to proclaim new redemptive stories of divine worth.

*Vessels, holy and whole*  
*Broken, needing the One*

*Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.*

## **CENTERING HYMN**

*There Is a Balm in Gilead, Zion Virtual Choir*

### **WE CONFESS OUR SINS TO GOD**

Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels, and that the health of our minds deeply affects our physical and spiritual health. Let us pray:

Centering and Calming Divine Breath of God, you gifted us with amazing minds, capable of so many things. You gave us the ability to think and feel, imbuing us with discernment of thought and emotion. Like our physical bodies, sometimes this aspect of our selves is beleaguered. We struggle under the strain of disappointment, despair, and delusion. Too often we hide this, afraid of what others might think of our difficulties in managing or moving forward, even in the face of devastating circumstances. Too often we perpetuate the stigma of a less-than-perfect state of mind by shaming ourselves and others. Millennia of misunderstanding compounds our fear. We label and belittle, all the while turning the hatred upon ourselves, for no one is immune from troubles of the mind at some point. So many are suffering now, God, weary and distraught, grieving and at the end of their rope. We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away, sometimes even from the need in our own community.

Help us, Healer. Show us our capacity for compassion. Forgive our inattention. Move us to move one step at a time toward greater care for one another. In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness. *Time for silent confession...*

*Vessels, holy and whole  
Broken, needing the One  
Open, body and soul  
Healer, come.*

### **ASSURANCE OF GRACE**

I invite you to imagine and search for a warmth at the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. This warm orb of light is deep within you, although sometimes it feels dulled, even cold. If it feels this way now, allow this. Do not

judge yourself. Perhaps you DO feel this warmth and all feels right with the world. This just is. You likely will not always feel that way. Whether or not you feel the warmth of peace and assurance right now, this does not make you right or wrong, good or bad. It just makes you human. And you are not alone. Perhaps you can imagine the warmth coming from someone whose presence fills you with comfort. See it radiate from them to you, as it does when you need it most.

Know this: You are accepted. No. Matter. What. Accepting the truth of our difficulties is part of the journey of recovery. Sharing our stories of difficulty can open the way for healing. For you, for me, for all. Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you...and breathe out with the relief of assurance.

## **HYMN**

*Community of Christ, Martha Main*

## **WE HEAR GOD'S WORD**

*Matthew 9:27-33*

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows of this." But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district. After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel."

## **MEDITATION**

*Clarity*

## **WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD WITH OUR GIVING**

**Invitation** – It is easy to offer our money and our gold, but God desires our hearts and our lives. Even as we offer our gifts in the offering plates this day, let us reflect on how we might give our hearts and lives, so that others may know the truth of God's wisdom and love.~

**March Benevolence** – Our March Benevolence Offering will go to support One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS). OGHS, part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that

carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. One Great Hour of Sharing also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response. If you'd like to support OGHS, please, clearly indicated on your envelope, check, or PayPal note what portion of your donation you'd like to go to support this ministry.

You can mail your offerings to our office. We check the mail regularly.  
Zion United Church of Christ  
8916 E. Troy Ave.  
Indianapolis, IN 46239

Or, you can donate through our website through our secure PayPal button at [www.zionuccindy.net/donate](http://www.zionuccindy.net/donate). Please know that PayPal receives a 2.2% processing fee and a \$0.30 transaction charge. You are able to set up reoccurring, monthly payments.

**We Give Thanks** – May the gifts we bring be gifts of love. May the offerings we share be offerings of our hearts. May each gift be blessed by your grace, that others may know the truth of your wisdom and your love. Amen.~

## WE GATHER AT THE TABLE



**Set Your Place at the Table**—Communion was first celebrated in the homes of those in the early church. Friends and family would gather together to pray, singing songs, and break bread. We carry on that tradition today. Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it.

Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

**Our Invitation**—In this sacred season of Lent, we remember how far God's love would go to bring healing to our brokenness. Today we come before God as we are, with all our brokenness and sharp edges, with those parts of us that long for restoration and renewal. It is at Christ's table where we can encounter the abundance of God's healing love that has been so freely given.

**The Words of Institution**—We remember that on the night of betrayal and desertion, and on the eve of death, Jesus gathered the disciples for the feast of Passover. Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the disciples saying: ‘This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, Jesus also took the cup after supper, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ By eating this bread and drinking this cup, we proclaim Christ’s death and celebrate Christ’s resurrection, and await Christ’s coming again.+

**Blessing Our Meal**—Holy Spirit, pour out your presence into this bread and into this cup that they might be a visible sign of your invisible grace. Even though we gather from a distance, may our moments at this table remind us of the richness of the Body of Christ, as this sacred meal unites us as one. Bless this meal that it may tend to our wounds, heal our spirits, and energize us for the work to which you have called us. Amen.

**We Share the Bread and the Cup** – (*Taking the bread*) Take and eat, this is Christ’s body broken for you. (*Taking the cup*) Take and drink, this is Christ’s blood shed for you and the forgiveness of sins.

**We Give Thanks**— Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior’s presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us with all who are fed by Christ’s body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen.’

## COMMISSION

### **We Are Sent Forth with a Blessing**

Each week we look at the reaction of the crowd in the healing story. This week the crowd was amazed and cried out that nothing like it had ever been seen before. How interesting that the crowd is “seeing” something for the first time, just like the blind man is brought to sight! Could it be that this is as important to the story as the ones who received physical healing? How could we open our eyes, figuratively, in new ways? What do we need to envision anew?

And so in our communal discerning about how this church community could become a “health hub” through our ministry and mission, let us put our minds to imagining how we could shine a positive light on the work of mental health. The needs are so urgent, especially now. I invite you to spend time again this week exploring the possibilities for a new or renewed commitment to a contribution we can make at Zion UCC to our larger community’s effort to recover from this past year. Especially, as we continue on in our visioning process, let us be open to the healing and renewing Spirit that has called us together in this common ministry and mission.

*Lenten Anthem: “Holy Vessels”*  
*Vessels, holy and whole*  
*Broken, needing the One*  
*Open, body and soul*  
*Healer, come.*

Now go with confidence that the One Who Is Living Water is already cleansing, renewing, and clarifying our lives, recovering our depth of love for all and our joy of living in this world. May the words of Jesus ring in your ears: “Do you believe it is possible?” And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver salve to your soul and a spring in your step. Amen.

*Vessels, holy and whole*  
*Broken, needing the One*  
*Open, body and soul*  
*Healer, come.*

**POSTLUDE**

*Healer of Broken Hearts, Martha Main*

Worship Notes: ~ Scifres, Mary; Beu, B. J.. The Abingdon Worship Annual 2021. Abingdon Press. ‘UCC Book of Worship. *Worship series design and original music* ©Worship Design Studio, used with permission. [www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/vessels)