

— *Let Us Dream God's Dream* —



**"Insight"**

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

*Inspired by John 9:8-41*

## ***Welcome!***

*Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.*

**Restrooms** are located down the hall on the main floor.

**All Gender Restrooms** are located at the back of the sanctuary and downstairs in the Fellowship Hall (which is accessible).

**Changing tables** are located in the Nursery on the main floor and at the back of the sanctuary.

**The Coffee Bar** is available at the back of the sanctuary from 9:30–11:30.

**\*An asterisk** is an invitation to rise, in body or spirit.  
**Bolded text** is an invitation for the congregation to read or sing in unison.



## ***Our Guiding Principles***

*Adopted by Council - 2020*

The Guiding Principles of First Congregational Church of St. Louis describe the values that guide our church and its members throughout our faith journey. We will...

### **Practice Extravagant Welcome**

- Invite and honor the contributions of every member, quirks and all.
- Be grateful for the gifts and time that each of us dedicate to FCC.

### **Demonstrate Faithful Leadership**

- Value people and our faith community over money and material things.
- Share concerns with the appropriate person and keep discussions and comments of others confidential.
- Celebrate successes, own mistakes, and fail faithfully together and in community.

### **Engage in Inclusive Decision Making**

- Be thoughtful, respectful and transparent in our decision making.
- Value building consensus and move forward faithfully once a decision is reached.
- Listen to one another and debate with respect; honor the contributions of every member.

**Overall, we will be guided by FCC's mission to Know God's Word, Do God's Work, and Live God's Love.**



**seeking:**  
honest questions  
for deeper faith

Worship March 19, 2023

## Who sinned?

Welcome & Announcements

Bert Merrell

Prelude "Who Has Known the Mind of Jesus"

Prayer of Illumination

*The Lord's Prayer*

Our Mother, Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

\*Hymn "Just as I Am"

#207  
WOODWORTH

Just as I am, without one plea  
but that your blood was shed for me,  
And that you called inviting me,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, you will receive,  
will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because your promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, your love unknown  
has broken every barrier down;  
Now to be yours, and yours alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

## Call to the People

Leader: Scripture is full of questions...

**People: Where are you?**

Leader: Am I my brother's keeper?

**People: Whom shall I send?**

Leader: Who do you say that I am?

**People: Who sinned?**

Leader: How many times shall I forgive?

**People: If God is for us, who can be against us?**

Leader: Scripture is full of questions, so just like those in our scriptures,  
may we bring our full curiosity and wonder into this space.

**People: Let us ask and seek after our merciful God.**

## Lenten Response

"We Come With Questions" v. 1

Text by Anna Strickland

LOBE DEN HERREN

**We come with questions assuming that there will be answers,**

**Setting the world in an order that obeys our grammar.**

**We want to know where Spirit's river will flow,**

**Frustrated by her meanders.**

## Call to Confession

### Anthem

"Make Me a Channel of Your Peace"

arr. Jane Holstein

Words & Music Sebastian Temple

*Make me a channel of your peace.*

*Where there is hatred let me bring your love.*

*Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.*

*O Master, grant that I may never seek  
so much to be consoled as to console  
to be understood as to understand  
to be loved, as to love, with all my soul.*

*Make me a channel of your peace.*

*Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.*

*Where there is darkness only light,  
and where there's sadness ever joy.*

*O Master, grant that I may never seek...*

*Make me a channel of your peace.*

*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
in giving of ourselves that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.*

## **Prayer of Confession & Words of Forgiveness**

**Leader:** Who here has sinned?

**People:** We have sinned. We put our heads in the sand.

**We ignored people in need.**

**We make false assumptions and fail to be kind.**

**We are in need of forgiveness.**

**Leader:** Good news! Our God is a merciful God.

God does not punish, hold grudges, or keep score.

When you suffer, God weeps. When you sin, God forgives.

When you lose your way, God comes running.

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

**Response:** "We Come With Questions" v. 2

**Here is the mystery we claim as the followers of Jesus:**

**Christ has died, Christ is raised, Christ daily comes to redeem us.**

**Grace free, not earned, whether or not we deserve,**

**God works beyond rules and boundaries.**

**Leader:** Have you sinned? I have sinned.

I put my head in the sand. I ignore people in need.

I make false assumptions and fail to be kind.

I, too, am in need of forgiveness.

**People:** Good news! Our God is a merciful God.

**God does not punish, hold grudges, or keep score.**

**When you suffer, God weeps. When you sin, God forgives.**

**When you lose your way, God comes running.**

**Lenten Response**      "We Come With Questions" v. 3

**God help us live into mystery beyond comprehension.**

**Quiet our minds always clamoring for some direction.**

**Give us your peace with all that we can't perceive,**

**Holding us within the tension.**

**\*Passing of the Peace**

**Children's Moment**

**Emily Stokes**

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

**Anthem****"Open Thou Mine Eyes"***Benjamin Harlan*

*Open Thou mine eyes and I shall see. Open Thou mine ears and I shall hear.  
Incline my heart, I shall desire, order my steps and I shall walk the ways of Thy commandments.*

*O Lord my God be Thou to me a God that I may love You,  
that I may worship You and adore You, that I may follow You, that I may look to You.*

**Lenten Meditation**

Rev. Mia White

**Poetry Prayer****"Jesus in the Psych Ward" by Rev. Sarah Speed**

Hannah Rice

*Inspired by "Jesus at the Gay Bar" by Jay Hulmes***\*Hymn****"We Come With Questions"***Text by Anna Strickland*

LOBE DEN HERREN

**We come with questions assuming that there will be answers,  
Setting the world in an order that obeys our grammar.  
We want to know where Spirit's river will flow,  
Frustrated by her meanders.**

**Here is the mystery we claim as the followers of Jesus:  
Christ has died, Christ is raised, Christ daily comes to redeem us.  
Grace free, not earned, whether or not we deserve,  
God works beyond rules and boundaries.**

**God help us live into mystery beyond comprehension.  
Quiet our minds always clamoring for some direction.  
Give us your peace with all that we can't perceive,  
Holding us within the tension.**

**\*Blessing**

**Leader: As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking.**

**People : We will seek out the hungry. We will seek the weary.**

**We will seek the good in every person we pass.**

**Leader: Seek out the hopeful. Seek the faithful. Seek God in each of us.**

**People: As we seek and as we wonder, may we find what we are looking for.**

**In the name of our loving God, who is always seeking us,  
we will go now in peace. Amen.**

**Postlude****"Comest Thou, Jesus, Down from Heaven"***J.S. Bach*

## Thank you to those serving this morning:

### Announcements

Bert Merrell

### Ushers

Mark Barlow

Kevin Ceballos

### Scripture

Emily Stokes

### Chancel Choir

Jeral Becker, Wanda Becker, Marty Black, Paul Black, Kathy Botney, Dan Brodsky, Mary Brown, Megan Glass, Carol Klein, Sheila Merrell, David Piston,

Nathan Ruggles, Stephanie Ruggles, Leila Sadat,

Katie Solomon, Owen Solomon, Aiden Smith

### Zoom Coffee Hour Host

Jane Feagans-King

### This morning's liturgy comes from:

Prayers from Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org;  
and <https://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/2022/>

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## - Announcements -

### One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

Today we are receiving the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, one of the special mission offerings of the UCC. This Lenten offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the UCC within Wider Church Ministries. Gifts to OGHS provide immediate aid and long-term support to people experiencing hunger, thirst, disaster, or crisis around the world. If you would like to make a gift to this offering, please use the envelope included with your bulletin. Make all checks out to First Congregational Church and we will pass along the funds to the Conference. You may also give online - Choose the Special Offerings option and specify OGHS.

### Office Hours this Week

Due to Hannah Rice's vacation, the office will be closed through Wednesday. Emily Stokes is also on vacation this week and will only be in the office on Tuesday. Pastor Mia will be in the office Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

### Palm Sunday Drama - April 2 during Worship

Our worship on Palm Sunday will include an intergenerational drama written by Hannah Rice - "Where Are You Headed?" - continuing the theme of our Lenten series. We will rehearse on Saturday April 1 from 10 AM - 12 PM. This is for all ages! If you'd like to participate, contact Emily Stokes or Hannah Rice.



## "Navigators" Discussion Group hosted by FCC Young Professionals Group

April 19, May 17, 5:30-7 PM

FCC young professionals are invited to a monthly discussion group. These upcoming topical events give members and friends an opportunity to meet outside of the church building to discuss where faith fits in our ever-changing lives. While many topics are aimed toward young professionals, we are not limited to a single age group and encourage broader participation. Join the group for happy hour and discussion at Fallon's in Olivette (9200 Olive Blvd), once/month. Upcoming topics: Who's in your inner circle? (April 19), Self Care and Spiritual Care (May 17).

## Young Women's Leadership Conference

March 30, 7:00 PM

People of all ages and genders are invited to attend the Young Women's Leadership Conference at John Burroughs School in Haertter Hall. Madeline Buchowski, daughter of FCC member Katherine Buchowski, is co-moderating the conference. The keynote speaker is Amanda Nguyen, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for her work as an advocate for survivors of sexual assault. She was also one of Time's Women of the Year last year. FCC member Robyn Wiens will be a panelist during the discussion portion. See the link in Friday's email newsletter to RSVP.

## Please RSVP - Pastor Mia's Installation

Sunday April 30, 3:00 PM

Pastor Mia's installation service will be Sunday April 30 at 3:00 PM in our sanctuary and streaming online, followed by a reception. Rev. Traci Blackmon will preach and we'll have a special guest musician. Please RSVP to the office or on the sheets at each entrance to the sanctuary to aid in our planning!

## This Week at FCC

### Sunday March 19

10:00 AM - Worship Service

11:20 AM - Zoom Coffee Hour

Meeting ID: 314 721 5060

Passcode: coffee

7:30 PM - AA Meeting (Social Hall)

### Monday March 20

Church Office Closed Mondays

(Staff Team day off)

### Tuesday March 21

10:00 AM - Sacred Studies &  
Fellowship (Parlor)

7:00 PM - Charis Chorus  
Rehearsal (Fell. Hall)

### Wednesday March 22

8:00 AM - Wydown Men's Club  
(Social Hall)

12:00 PM - Staff Team Meeting

### Thursday March 23

6:00 PM - Compass Improve  
(Fellowship Hall)

7:30 PM - Chancel Choir Rehearsal

### Sunday March 26

10:00 AM - Worship Service

Faith & Fun (Soc. Hall)

11:20 AM - Zoom Coffee Hour

7:30 PM - AA Meeting (Social Hall)

## Holy Week Services

**Palm Sunday**  
**April 2, 10 AM**

Wave your palm branches with us on Palm Sunday! The service will include an intergenerational drama called "Where Are You Headed?". Stay after worship for a petting zoo outside featuring goats, a mini donkey, pony rides, and more!

**Good Friday**  
**April 7, 7 PM**

On Good Friday we will experience the sorrow of Jesus' crucifixion. Please join us for scripture, music, and gathering darkness.

**Easter Sunday**  
**April 9, 10 AM**

Celebrate the resurrection with us on Easter as we ask, "Who are you looking for?".



Our bulletin cover art was inspired by today's scripture. Here are the artist's reflections:

"Insight" by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity  
Silk painting with digital drawing and collage

In seven verses, the gospel writer tells us that a man born blind is given sight. But after that, the narrator devotes thirty-three verses to the details of disagreement that swell after the healing takes place. I used to find this second part of the story tedious and exhausting. In a world with constant conflict, I'm tired of listening

to endless bickering. However, this second half of the story makes me realize that this encounter is hardly about physical healing or literal blindness. It's about how harmful theology can prevent us from seeing people—truly seeing them. It's about how our narrow imagination can harden into accusation and blame. It's about how we can be threatened by new ideas or shifts in someone's identity. It's about how our doctrine can lead to exile. Ultimately, it's a story about our resistance to change. Can this be a cautionary tale for us? In this image, hands expressing denial and exclusion press in on the man. In the background, I wrote a barrage of questions I imagine emerging from the crowd: Why did God heal you? What did you do to cause this? Who sinned? Alongside those questions, I wove in contemporary statements I've heard spoken in situations when we think a tidy rationale will comfort us: Everything happens for a reason. God only gives you as much as you can handle. Pray harder. I wonder what this story would look like had better questions been asked. What if his neighbors had instead asked the blind man, "How do you feel?" What if the man had asked the crowd, "What are you afraid of?" What if the Pharisees had asked one another, "What if it's time to change?" Surrounded by remnants of narrow vision, the man has new insight. He looks beyond the words, beyond the crowd, beyond the accusations driving him out of town. Can we seek understanding without denigrating or objectifying humans in the process?

## Daily Devotional for Lent Week Four: Who sinned?

*Journal or meditate on these questions each day.*

### **Sunday March 19: How do you describe God?**

Prayer: Holy God, there are so many names for you. How could I use just one? I could call you Friend, Healer, Creator, Teacher. The list goes on. As I move through Lent and continue to read your stories, remind me that you are bigger than my imagination. For that, I give thanks. Amen.

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### **Monday March 20: In John 9, the disciples make assumptions about the reason for a man's blindness. When have you made an assumption? How have you changed your mind?**

Prayer: God of patience, changing my mind can be like a slow and painful journey of dismantling and reassembling furniture in my mind. Scripture reminds us that holiness can be found in changing our minds. Help me see where I may need to dismantle and reassemble, and guide me. Amen.

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### **Tuesday March 21: Connecting sin with disease was something the disciples had to unlearn (John 9). What are you trying to unlearn?**

Prayer: God, I have stereotypes to unlearn. I have negative self-talk to unlearn. I have to unlearn the societal message that my worth comes from my productivity. There are so many messages in my head that do not come from you. Unravel those messages, and pull me back toward your embrace. Amen.

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### **Wednesday March 22: Where in your life do you need healing?**

Prayer: Healing God, I could use your help today. There are things that I carry, things that I wrestle with, things that bring a heaviness to my life. If you can, offer healing. Bind yourself to the broken parts of me. Smear mud on my eyes. Call me by name. Heal what hurts. With hope I wait, amen.

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### **Thursday March 23: The disciples seek answers and clarity from Jesus. What answers do you seek?**

Prayer: Omnipotent God, I have dozens of questions bubbling up inside me—how, and why, and for how long? I know your love is not a magic eight ball, spitting out pithy answers to the world's wonderings, so I will keep bringing my questions to you. I will keep asking. I will keep seeking, and I trust that you will meet me in the middle. With hope for your promised day I pray, amen.

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### **Friday March 24: Jesus heals a blind man who then professes his faith saying, "Lord, I believe" (John 9). What do you believe—about yourself, and about God?**

Prayer: Gracious God, I am always inspired when I hear other people say, "Lord, I believe." It makes me ask myself—what do I believe—about you, about community, about myself? I believe that you are a gracious and loving God. I believe that I am held in your embrace. Give me faith, like the man born blind, to carry that conviction and believe for all of my days. Amen.

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### **Saturday March 25: The healed man is isolated from his community due to his faith in Jesus (John 9). Where and when has your faith felt like something that isolates you? When has it connected you?**

Prayer: Jesus of Nazareth, you never said that being a person of faith would be easy. In today's world, being a person of faith can feel isolating. However, it also ties me to community. Help me always remember that you are with me. I am never alone. Amen.



*Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.*

**Our Ministry Team:**

**Mehran Moslehikhah, Maintenance**

**Tim Clark, Minister of Music**  
([tclark@firstcongregational.org](mailto:tclark@firstcongregational.org))

**Emily Stokes (MAPS), Minister of Faith Formation**  
([estokes@firstcongregational.org](mailto:estokes@firstcongregational.org))

**Hannah Rice (MDiv), Minister of Administration and Membership**  
([hrice@firstcongregational.org](mailto:hrice@firstcongregational.org))

**Rev. Mia White (MDiv, MATS, CSD), Senior Minister**  
([revmia@firstcongregational.org](mailto:revmia@firstcongregational.org))



**FCC  
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**News  
& Events**



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