

Use the following worship guide if you are joining us on Sunday morning via Zoom. Simply click here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2398495210>

** Announcements are at the end of this order of worship. **



The Service of Worship

First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ

Baltimore, Maryland

Fourth Sunday in Lent – Year A

March 19, 2023

10:30 a.m.

Meditation for Worship

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift.” – Mary Oliver

Prelude

The King of Love My Shepherd Is
by John Ness Beck

Nancy Chronister, Director of Music

Welcome

The Rev. Kelly M. Sisson, Pastor

Call to Worship ~congregation reads **bold print**~

Early each morning, God waits to greet us with joy and wonder.

We awake to find ourselves enveloped in grace.

During the day, Jesus comes to invite us to serve.

We rise from our work and leisure to bring healing and hope to others.

In the shadowed evenings of our fears and worries, the Spirit is with us.

The Light of life is shines on us in every moment of every day.

Preparation for Worship

Kyrie Eleison ~ see insert ~

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 23

Amanda Ajulu, Liturgist

Hymn for Worship NCH #247

My Shepherd Is the Living God

CONSOLATION

~ as you are able, please stand ~

The Lesson from Christian Scriptures

Ephesians 5:8-14

Amanda Ajulu, Liturgist

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Please remember these shared concerns:

- Our siblings in the Ukraine, and prayers for peace
- Jen Langdon – awaiting surgery 03/28
- Nikki Balding's father-in-law
- Andrew Sisson, our pastor's brother
- Catherine McDougall – Bill Ingram's daughter
- Bonnie Duff – Sharon Barr's mother
- Carl and Patti Flandermeyer – Nancy Chronister's parents
- Emily's friend, Sharon. Living with cancer
- Jen Langdon's nephew, Bryce
- Stef's brother, David, living with Alzheimer's

Call to Reconciliation

God longs for us to sit by the still waters of love, but we are too busy stirring up trouble with our actions, with our words, with our inability to be God's children. Let

us bring our prayers to the One who will restore us with goodness and mercy, as we pray together, saying,

Unison Prayer for Forgiveness

Like Cinderella, Loving God, we sit in the ashes of our hopes, but you see us as your beloved children. We pay strict attention to all who break the rules, but ignore the grace which is poured out upon us. We try to box you in with boundaries we can manage, but you continue to burst forth to bring newness into the world.

Have mercy on us, God of forgiveness, and open our eyes to your presence among us. As you look at our hearts, may we see others in a different way, not as enemies or strangers, but siblings of the same family, kin to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

The Spirit of the Lord has come upon us, bringing hope, life, and forgiveness for each person.

Now we will go forth as God's children, sent to bring the good news to everyone we meet.

Congregational Response

Kyrie Eleison ~ see insert ~

A Message for All Children

Hymn for Assurance NCH #547 *Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound* AMAZING GRACE
~ as you are able, please stand ~

The Scripture Lesson

John 9:1-41

Amanda Ajulu, Liturgist

Anthem

Farther On

Choir

Shape Note Hymn Tune (anonymous)

The Homily

Embracing Light and Dark

Rev. Sisson

Making our Offerings:

Please consider making an offering through on-line giving, or mail your check to the church address. You can find information on our church web page: first-ststephens.org You may also place your offering in the offering plate in the back of the sanctuary.

Prayer of Dedication

~congregation reads bold print~

With you as our shepherd and by sharing our gifts, we can indeed anoint others with grace, prepare feasts for the hungry, welcome the stranger, and love those we consider to be our enemies. Bless these gifts, and use our lives for others, we pray. Amen.

Hymn for Sending

NCH #451 *Be Now My Vision*

SLANE

~ as you are able, please stand ~

Benediction

Rev. Sisson

Postlude

Worship Resources for today are adapted from:

Thom Shuman, PCUSA – adapted

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Report of Subcommittees will be presented today immediately after the worship service. Plan to stay to hear these reports and ask questions. Final reports will be heard in May as the congregation makes decisions about its future.

Lenten Day Retreat – Saturday, April 1, 2023 from 9:30a.m. – 3:30p.m. at the church. Our time together will focus on **creating mandalas as a means of prayer**. Participants will need to commit to being present for the entire time. Cost: \$25 includes supplies, breaks, and lunch. This is the last week to register.

Have you considered joining the membership of First and St. Stephen's? If you are interested in learning about membership at First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ, please let the pastor know of your interest to set up a time to talk with her.

Changing the Cycles is an effort to end menstrual poverty in Baltimore schools. You can be a part of this effort by bringing sanitary products and placing them in the box in the foyer beside the red wagon.

ACTC – is in need of your support. They are requesting the following items immediately:

- bottled water
- Canned soup
- Canned green beans
- Rice
- Pasta
- Peanut butter
- Grape or strawberry jelly
- Pop tarts

Please fill the red wagon on Sundays with any of these items so that we can deliver generously on Mondays.

Called Business Meeting – On April 2nd there will be a brief business meeting to consider two recommendations from the Consistory. The congregation is asked to authorize funds from the endowment to make payments. The second recommendation is to remove the five percent cap on spending endowment funds before returning to the congregation for approval.

Butterflies for Easter – If you have paintings, prints, or other artwork of butterflies that you would be willing to share for Easter, please contact the pastor and let her know. These need to be framed and have a wire backing.



