

Madison Mennonite Church
Koinonia Worship

March 14, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Lent

GATHERING

Greet one another and add names to the liturgy of those who would like to lead, read, or facilitate. Each blank can be filled by a different person, and all ages are encouraged to participate in leadership! Help non-readers with their lines. Everyone reads the "Many" parts, unmuted for groups reading virtually. Re-mute afterward.

Call to Worship: Leader/One _____

One: The wilderness is without and within. It too is part of God's path,
though we fear wild, barren places, as did the people of old.

**Many: But when we are lost, God's grace surrounds us.
When we are vulnerable, God holds us close.**

One: In our barren places, God calls us to wholeness,
even when we cannot see beyond the danger, isolation, and need.

Many: We forget that God is already at work in these difficult, painful places.

One: Just as Isaiah tells us of a way in the wilderness,
so do we find our way along the path God calls us to.

**Many: For we are what God has made us,
created in Christ Jesus for good works.**

All: We call out to you, as you call us to deeper healing.

Hymn: Sing/hum along or listen to a "What Wondrous Love is This?" Choose your own adventure! Pick one or listen to both if you're enjoying the music. Lyrics are slightly different in both versions.

- Version #1: [Marty Haugen's beautiful rendition](#) with a lovely wilderness image to visually meditate on, and some acapella 4-part harmony in the middle. 4:07
- Version #2: [Sacred Harp #159 \(Texas Shapenote Singers\)](#): They will first sing through with the names of the notes, then sing a few verses with lyrics (in stunning harmony!). 2:18
- The Mennonite version: Voices Together #564/HWB #530 (Lyrics are slightly different.)

Prayer of Confession and Assurance: Leader/One _____

Confession is a central practice of Lent. Confession is telling the truth. We confess what we have done, what we believe, what we feel, and what we fear. We confess our need for restoration. True confession is a deep dive, sometimes into truths we haven't yet expressed or have a hard time bringing to the surface.

**Many: Deep calls to deep.
We call to you from the depths of our hearts.**

One: We confess how the wilderness has revealed our need,
uncovering our impatience,
lifting up our pain.
We confess how the wilderness has revealed your truth.
We are created for good works.
We can turn and live.

(Silence. Or name the forces that keep us from deep healing.)

Deep calls to deep.
You call us from the depth of your love.

**Many: Calling us to deep healing.
 We come to you, God.**

One: Do not fear, says God, for I walk beside you always.

Lighting our Candles: Leader _____

Leader: Each week, we light a candle to symbolize Christ's presence with us and the unity we have with our beloved siblings at Madison Mennonite.

Light candles

Leader: Christ, our light, bless our fellowship with your Spirit's presence. We remember other MMC Koinonia Groups and pray that we are all united in love and peace. Amen.

Optional tactile engagement: Invite all ages, but children especially, to use the coloring page provided with this week's service. At the end, ask anyone who would like to share their work to do so during the reflection time.

HEARING the WORD: Reader 1 _____; Reader 2 _____

Isaiah 43: 19-21

Look, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth--can't you see it?
I'm making a road in the desert
and setting rivers to flow in the wasteland.
Wild beasts will honor me--
the jackals and the ostriches--
for I will put water in the desert
and rivers in the wasteland
for my chosen people to drink,
these people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Ephesians 2: 4-10

But God, rich in mercy and loving us so much, brought us to life in Christ, even when we were dead in our sins. It is through this grace we have been saved. God raised us up and, in union with Christ Jesus, gave us a place in the heavenly realm, to display in ages to come how immense are the resources of God's grace and kindness in Christ Jesus. And it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and even that is not of yourselves, but the gift of God. Nor is it a reward for anything that you have done, so nobody can claim the credit. We are the work of God's hands, created in Christ Jesus to do the good things God created us to do from the beginning.

Hymn: Sing along/listen to "[O Healing River](#)" performed by Pete Seeger 2:45 (VT #706/HWB #372)

Guiding Reflection: Reader: _____

Wilderness pushes us to our limits. Whether a barren desert, a rugged mountain terrain, or an expansive forest, wilderness reminds us of our needs and limitations. When they were facing the wilderness, the Israelites felt an acute loss of control and orientation. They didn't know where they were going, how long they might wander, and what they might encounter along the way. They feared



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the lack of provisions that might sustain them in the barren, unfamiliar landscape. In a similar way, the pandemic has forced us to confront our vulnerabilities as we encounter disease, death, economic hardship, loneliness, and depression. Our pain is both individual and collective; our impatience is felt in our desire for vaccinations, reopenings, and an end to the restrictions that have so changed our everyday lives. But deep in the wilderness, where our desperation is exposed, we hear God calling us to deep healing.

During the Israelite's desert wanderings, God provided manna from heaven and streams in the desert--interventions that showed God's love and care for her people even in the midst of great hardship. In the end, the Israelites were led into the promised land, but not until they had learned the lessons of the wilderness: that vulnerability can expose the places that need healing, and that God can meet our deepest needs.

Last week, Valerie reminded us we are still navigating the complicated and disorienting realities of this strange, unmasked-for time. Our pandemic-inflicted wounds still feel tender to the touch, and we all need experiences of God's grace. This week, we invite you deeper into the healing that is possible through Christ when we hold space for ourselves, for one another, and for the world.

Questions for Group Reflection: Facilitator _____

At its best, worship enables us to strengthen the connections we have to our faith community, to Creation, and to the Divine. Use this time to reflect together, using some or all of the questions below, or spend time in silence or draft your own questions if that is best for your group today.

1. What is a moment that you've been stranded or felt vulnerable out in nature? Have you felt a spiritual connection during those moments?
2. How is God calling you to deep healing?
3. A year into the pandemic, what needs have been exposed in your life? In the life of our church? In the community and in the world? How has God met those needs, and what are the places where healing still needs to begin?

At the closing of this time of sharing, pray together:

Facilitator: Loving Spirit, we give you thanks for this time of discovery in scripture and discernment with one another. May our journeys within and through wilderness help us to grow in wisdom and understanding as persons and as a church. Amen.

RESPONDING in PRAYER and FELLOWSHIP

Sharing Joys and Concerns: Leader _____

The Leader invites each person (children included!) to share any joys or concerns they bring to the group. Remind your group that if anyone does not wish to share, they may simply say "pass." After all, including the Leader, have been invited to share, and if no one has something to add after a first round, join in a spirit of prayer (below).

Level 1B adaptation: *If the group is 15 people or larger, invite people to type their name in the chat if they would like to share, as we do on All-Church Sundays. Call on people in that order. If the group is smaller than 15 people, follow the instructions above.*



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Praying Together

Leader: Holy God, we offer these prayers to you this day, trusting in your faithfulness.
We pray for ourselves, for our loved ones near and far. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
We pray for our community, our nation, and our world. *(a moment for silent prayer)*
Loving God,
Many: hear our prayers. Amen.

Sending: Leader _____

One: Through the barren lands of our lives, God is calling us to wholeness.
Although we may not see this as a time of possibility, God is already at work.
As we approach the spring equinox, a cosmic spark restores us.
Many: Go with the healing light of Christ. Amen.

Continued Fellowship (as time allows)

Invite children to share anything they've created or worked on during this worship time.

Today's Koinonia Worship was curated by Madi Vander Hill and Sara Phillips.

Sources used:

Bible reading from the Inclusive Bible
Leader resources from Lent-Easter 2021
Hymns from Marty Haugen, Texas Shapenote Singers, Pete Seeger

Announcements:

*Next Sunday in our All-Church gatherings, we will hear from John Brubacher in Adult CE. In worship, Charles Baraka will be preaching. We will also be commissioning those who are in leadership positions at MMC for the coming year.

This Week's Calendar:

Mon., Mar 15 - Menno Works Tea Talk 7pm
Tue., Mar 16 - Adult CE Committee 7pm
Wed., Mar 17 - Care Call 8:15pm
Thurs., Mar 18 - Boggle Group 7pm
Sun., Sept 20 - All-Church Adult CE 4pm, Worship 5pm, and Fellowship Time

For links to these virtual gatherings, please see the weekly e-calendar. To add an event, please email Erica Boehr.



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