

St. Paul's United Church of Christ  
March 19, 2023  
Brittany Mallieue

**Prelude**

**Ringling of the Bell**

**\*Call to Worship**

Liturgist: Kindred of God, a new vision of leadership is called forth and God calls upon the least likely, the unheard of, and the humble of heart to assemble to receive anointing.

**All: In peace, we anoint the forgotten, the youngest, smallest, and unlikeliest of siblings whom God has raised up to serve.**

Liturgist: Though the call may involve risk and danger, we are called to listen, obey, and live a love unwavering.

**All: In peace, we anoint the disinherited and dismissed.**

Liturgist: God's call does not depend on our outward appearance or our earthly achievements.

**All: In peace, we anoint neighbor and kin alike, knowing God looks upon the heart.**

**All: Let us open our hearts to God this day. Amen.**

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Anointed One, your love comes peaceably into our lives if we will but let it. We are so fixated on the gold standard, the familiar, and the safe choice that we often lose sight of what you are raising up right in our very midst. Enliven us with your Spirit this day so that we might get a glimpse of your peace. Take what we might imagine as too small for your kingdom and use it to open the world to your overflowing abundance and provision for all that you have created. In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. **Amen.**

**PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**

God of surprises, we know that we do not often perceive the world as you do. We look to the flashy fame, the grand gestures, optimal achievements, and unreachable standards. Yet, in spite of our misguided reach towards perfection, you give us glimpses of your grandeur and grace. Surprise us yet again this day, O God, that in our complacency which allows us to drift towards the same old ways of faith that we may be transformed anew. Provide us with a new cup of oil that we may be anointed by your love so that we may set out into your world to bless and anoint others. In the name of the One whose love and peace make all things new we pray. Amen.

**\*Hymn**

Eternal Father Strong to Save

#273

**\*Silent Prayer of Confession**

*(brief silence for reflection)*

## **PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE**

**God of surprises, we know that we do not often perceive the world as you do. We look to the flashy fame, the grand gestures, optimal achievements, and unreachable standards. Yet, in spite of our misguided reach towards perfection, you give us glimpses of your grandeur and grace. Surprise us yet again this day, O God, that in our complacency which allows us to drift towards the same old ways of faith that we may be transformed anew. Provide us with a new cup of oil that we may be anointed by your love so that we may set out into your world to bless and anoint others. In the name of the One whose love and peace make all things new we pray. Amen.**

### **\*Words of Assurance**

Liturgist: Friends, receive the anointing of God's tender love and forgiveness this day. For God's care and compassion for you abides in your heart today and always.

**All: We rise and set out restored and renewed. Amen.**

### **\*The Gloria Patri**

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen*

## **Welcome and Announcements**

### **Children's Sermon**

### **Scripture Reading**

John 9:1-41

<sup>1</sup>As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup>We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup>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, <sup>7</sup>saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. <sup>8</sup>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?" <sup>9</sup>Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup>But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup>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." <sup>12</sup>They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup>Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>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." <sup>16</sup>Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. <sup>17</sup>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."

<sup>18</sup>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 <sup>19</sup>and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born

blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup>His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup>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." <sup>25</sup>He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup>They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup>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?" <sup>28</sup>Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup>We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup>The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup>We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup>Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup>They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup>He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." <sup>38</sup>He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup>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." <sup>40</sup>Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" <sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

## Sermon

### Hymn

Amazing Grace

#233

### Offering of our Gifts

Liturgist: It is not the outward appearance or size of the gifts we have to share that matters to God. It is the loving generosity of our hearts that is closest to the heart of God. We are invited to give this day out of the abundance of our lives, from our heart, knowing that no matter the size of the gift that God knows our hearts.

**All: We give this day from our hearts and may it be pleasing to God. Amen.**

### \*Doxology

*Praise God from who all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below, Praise God above ye heavenly hosts, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen*

### \*Offering Prayer

**Generous God, you remind us that you "anoint our heads with oil" and that our "cup overflows" with your abundance. We do not take for granted all that you provide. Take these gifts and use them for the healing and tender care of your hurting world. May your cup of love overflow and abide with the hurting and heartbroken, forgotten and despised, so that we may all be made whole. Amen.**

**\*Hymn**

Be Thou my Vision

#288

**\*Benediction**

Kindred, set out from this place not to anoint power, prestige, and the outer appearances of grandiosity. Rather, set out from this place to anoint healing, renewal, and raise up those unexpected places and people that God has set apart for the transformation of the world. Open yourselves to the surprising and unexpected movements of the Holy Spirit, for around the corner of every assumption we carry and every community we live in, is a small shepherd among us waiting to lead with God's help. Go forth in peace to lead, to love, and be renewed by God.

**Amen and Amen!**

**\*Postlude**