

Old First Presbyterian Church

seeking:
who sinned?



“insight” by Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Inspired by John 9:8-14, silk painting with digital drawing and collage

Fourth Sunday in Lent March 19, 2023

Worship Through Praising God

Please fill out a guest card found in the pew rack and place it in the offering plate or give it to an usher.

Silence is requested as we prepare our hearts for worship.

** At the asterisk, please rise in body or spirit.*

Prelude Adagio Cantabile from Symphonie IV Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)

**Welcome and
Church Life**

Introit

Walker's Southern Harmony, 1835

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

American Folk Hymn, c. 1811

***Call to
Worship**

Samuel Cheng

Leader

Scripture is full of questions:

People

Where are you?

Leader

Am I my sibling'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 also bring our full curiosity and wonder to this place.

People

Let us ask and seek after our merciful God.

***Hymn**

We Come with Questions

Sung to LOBE DEN HERREN ("Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty," Hymn 35)

1

**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.

2

**Here is the mystery we claim as disciples 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.

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.

***Prayer of
Confession and
Forgiveness**

Samuel Cheng

Leader

Who here has sinned?

People

We have sinned.

We have put our heads in the sand.

We have ignored people in need.

We have made false assumptions and failed to be kind.

We are in need of forgiveness.

People **Have you sinned?**
Leader I have sinned.
I have put my head in the sand.
I have ignored people in need.
I have made false assumptions and failed to be kind.
I, too, am in need of forgiveness.

We confess silently.

Leader There is Good News for us!
People **Our God is a merciful God.**
Our God does not punish,
hold grudges or keep score.

Leader When we suffer, God weeps.
When we sin, God forgives.
When we lose our way, God comes running.

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

***Hymn 205**

Jacques Berthier (1923-1994)

Ubi caritas et amor, *Where love and affection are -*
Ubi caritas Deo ibi est. *Where love is, God is there.*

Offering *Ushers will receive the offering during the anthem. You may also make your offering electronically using the kiosk in the narthex.*

Anthem

Glenn L. Rudolph (born 1951)

Jesu, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills the breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Savior of humankind.

Jesu, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesu, be thou our glory now,
And through eternity. Amen.

12th-century Latin; translated by Edward Caswell (1814-1878)

***Doxology**

DUKE STREET

Arranged by Hal H. Hopson (born 1933)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise God, all creatures here below,
Praise God above, ye heavenly host,
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Time with Our
Children**

***The Peace**

Leader Peace be with you.
People **And also with you.**

Worship Through Hearing God's Word

Scripture John 9:1-39

Leader For the Word of God in scripture,
For the Word of God within us,
For the Word of God among us,

People Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Pastor Henderson

**Affirmation
of Faith**

**We believe in a merciful God,
a God who does not keep score,
a God who wants good for us.
We believe in a creative God,
a God who would heal with mud,
a God capable of seeing what we cannot.
We believe in a saving God,
a God who heals,
a God who greets our questions with patience,
a God who sends us out with hope in our step.
What wondrous love is this! Amen.**

Worship Through Holy Communion

**Invitation to the
Lord's Table**

**The Great
Thanksgiving**

Leader The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Leader Lift up your hearts.

People We lift them to the Lord.

Leader Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

People It is right to give God thanks and praise.

The leader continues the Great Thanksgiving...

**The Lord's
Prayer**

**Our 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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**The Words of
Institution**

**The Bread and
the Cup**

All are invited to share in the Lord's Supper.

Simply follow the directions of the leaders.

The communion trays have wine and grape juice.

The inner clear cups hold wine. The outer purple cups hold grape juice.

Worship Through Responding to God's Word

***Hymn 649 Amazing Grace**

- 1 **Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.**
- 2 **'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!**
- 3 **Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come.
'Tis grace has brought me save thus far,
and grace will lead me home.**
- 4 **The Lord has promised good to me;
his word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.**
- 5 **When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.**

***Charge and
Benediction**

Choir

Swee Hong Lim (born 1963)

May the love of the Lord rest upon your soul.

May God's love dwell in you, throughout every day.

May God's countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May God's Spirit be upon you as you leave this place.

Maria Ling (born 1961)

Postlude Prelude in D minor

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Old First Presbyterian Church

Sharing God's Love, Welcome, and Justice on Our Corner, in Our City, and in the World

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Today's Flowers

Linda Reyder has given today's flowers in memory of Jessie MacFadyen. She gave last week's flowers in memory of her parents, Howard and Norma Reyder.

Concert for Turkey/Syria Earthquake Relief, March 25

On Saturday, March 25, at 3:00 pm, join us at Old First for a concert to raise funds for relief in the earthquake-stricken regions of Turkey and Syria. Plan to hear the many voices – choirs, soloists, ensembles from various San Francisco houses of worship – and to support relief efforts in the regions of Turkey and Syria hit by two earthquakes in a row. To make a donation, simply visit Old First's donations page <https://dev.oldfirst.org/donations//> - and under "Select Giving Opportunity" choose "Turkey Earthquake."

4th Saturday Community Dinner, March 25

The 4th Saturday Community Dinner this month falls on this coming Saturday, March 25. Can you help serve the meal and feast with our guests at the dinner? Volunteers are welcomed from 4:30 pm on. Let us know you can help: 4thsaturdaydinners@oldfirst.org

Flowers for Easter Sunday

Are you interested in sponsoring the flowers for Easter Sunday? For each fifteen dollar contribution you make, a dedication and your name will appear in the Easter bulletin. Please contact the church office **no later than Sunday, April 2**, and let Brad know the amount you're contributing and whom you'd like to remember or honor or for what blessing you'd like to give thanks. You can call Brad at 415-776-5552 or send him an E-mail: brad@oldfirst.org

This Week at Old First

- Sunday March 19, Fourth Sunday in Lent**
4:00 pm O1C: Ann DuHamel, "Prayers for a Feverish Planet," piano and electronics
7:15 pm Friendly Circle AA Meeting, Fellowship Hall
- Tuesday March 21**
7:00 pm Worship Committee, On-Line
- Wednesday March 22**
6:00 pm New Officer Training, On-Line
- Friday March 24**
8:00 pm O1C: "Aftermath," soprano, violin, cello, piano
- Saturday March 25**
9:00 am Interfaith Food Pantry, Fellowship Hall
3:00 pm Concert for Turkey/Syria Earthquake Relief, Sanctuary
5:15 pm 4th Saturday Community Meal, Fellowship Hall
- Sunday March 26, Fifth Sunday in Lent**
11:00 am Worship
4:00 pm O1C: Bernal Hill Players – "Forces of Nature," flutes, vihuela, saxophones, clarinets, piano, table, guitar
7:15 pm Friendly Circle AA Meeting, Fellowship Hall

Today's Liturgy and Art: A Sanctified Art

This Lent we are using “Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith,” creative resources for Lent and Easter from A Sanctified Art, a collaborative offering support to worshipping communities in integrating art and creativity into their spiritual practices.

The call to worship, prayer of confession, assurance of forgiveness, affirmation of faith, and closing hymn are adapted from prayers by the Reverend Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | www.sanctifiedart.org

The cover art “insight” is by Lisle Gwynn Garrity | A Sanctified Art LLC | www.sanctifiedart.org. Of the image, she says:

In seven verses [John 9:8-14], 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?

Holy Week, 2023

Palm Sunday/Passion Sunday, April 2

11:00 am at Old First Presbyterian Church

Maundy Thursday, April 6

There will be no service at Old First,
so please join one of our sister churches for worship on Maundy Thursday:
4:00 pm at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 1755 Clay Street at Van Ness Avenue, or
7:00 pm at Calvary Presbyterian Church, 2515 Fillmore Street at Jackson Street

Good Friday, April 7

7:00 pm at Old First Presbyterian Church

Easter Sunday, April 9

10:30 am Choral Prelude and 11:00 am Worship at Old First Presbyterian Church

Followed by an Easter Extravaganza Coffee Hour.

Please feel free to bring treats to share!

Old First Presbyterian Church Staff

The Reverend Maggi Henderson	Pastor
The Reverend Erwin C. Barron	Parish Associate
The Reverend Lisa Robecheck	Parish Associate
Larry Marietta	Music Director
Jarron Carlson	Composer in Residence
Brad Peterson	Office Admin
Kiristi Hoerauf	Wedding Coordinator