

First Congregational Church in Billerica, UCC
 SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020 – 10 AM
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

HOW TO JOIN ZOOM WORSHIP: On a computer, tablet or smartphone, follow this link (<https://zoom.us/j/984503617>) or go to our website (www.fccbillerica.org) and click the maroon button in the blue banner. Alternatively, you can call in and listen by dialing 929.205.6099 and, when prompted, entering the meeting ID: 984 503 617.

GATHERING THE COMMUNITY OF THE FAITHFUL

PRELUDE

WELCOME (PSALM 118:24 IN UNISON)

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN

This is the Day

#652

This is the day, this is the day
 that the Lord has made,
 that the Lord has made;
 we will rejoice, we will rejoice
 and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
 This is the day that the Lord has made;
 we will rejoice and be glad in it.
 This is the day, this is the day
 that the Lord has made.

LORD’S PRAYER

THE COMMUNITY AT PRAYER

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

HEARING AND PROCLAIMING THE WORD OF GOD

GOSPEL LESSON

John 9:1–41

As he walked along, [Jesus] 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 the man.” 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." But 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 [Temple authorities] 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 [Temple authorities]; for [the authorities] 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, and 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 near 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. [...]"

REFLECTION

One Thing I Do Know

RESPONDING IN LOVE

HYMN

Amazing Grace

#422

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. The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.
4. Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
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.

LITURGY OF FAREWELL

Sandy Galvin, Deacon: Our church family is constantly changing. People come and go. Babies are born. Children grow up. People commit themselves to one another. Loved ones and friends among us come to the end of their lives. Individuals move into our communities and church life. Others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and beginnings. This morning we lift up the ministry of the Rev. Seth Robinson and we share this time of farewell with him.

RECOGNITION OF THE END

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart, Associate Conference Minister, Northeast Association: On October 9, 2018, Seth began his service as designated-term associate pastor of First Congregational Church in Billerica.

Rev. Seth: I thank First Congregational Church in Billerica, its members and friends, for the love, kindness, and support shown me this last year and a half. I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have

made. I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned here.

***Congregation:* We receive your thankfulness, offer forgiveness, and accept that you now leave to minister elsewhere. We express our gratitude for your time among us. We ask your forgiveness for our mistakes. Your influence on our faith and faithfulness will not leave us at your departure.**

Rev. Seth: I forgive you and accept your gratitude, trusting that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

VOWS OF RELEASE

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart: Do you, the members and friends of First Congregational Church in Billerica, release Seth from the duties of pastor?

***People:* We do, with the help of God.**

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart: Do you offer your encouragement for his ministry as it unfolds in new ways?

***People:* We do, with the help of God.**

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart: Do you, Seth, release the people of First Congregational Church in Billerica from turning to you and depending on you?

Rev. Seth: I do, with the help of God.

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart: Do you offer your encouragement for their continued ministry here with your colleague, the Rev. Dr. Katherine Adams?

Rev. Seth: I do, with the help of God.

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart: On behalf of the Northeast Association of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ, I witness to the words spoken: words of thankfulness, forgiveness, and release. The member churches of our association and conference hold you in prayer. We pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

***People:* Thanks be to God.**

Rev. Wendy Vander Hart: God of all life, beginnings and endings, we turn to you in gratitude for the faithful ministry enacted here. We are thankful for the fruits of the partnership between this congregation and the Rev. Seth Robinson. We know you are pleased with the journey that has been taken and steps that yet lie ahead informed by this shared ministry. Bless each and every one as they bid goodbye and take up your service in different places. May all that was said and done here blossom and flourish to bring your realm ever more fully here on earth. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

HYMN

Go Now in Peace

#717

1. Go now in peace; though friends must part,
your presence lives in every heart.
Your gifts to us no words can tell:
go now in peace, in Christ go well.
2. Go now in hope, and hopeful stay,
though shadowed valleys hide your way;
through good and evil, joy and pain,
with God, in Spirit, you remain.
3. Go now in faith, through time and chance,
until we join the wedding dance

as partners of the Three-in-One,
where all is ended and begun.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE