

South Elkhorn Christian Church

Digital Liturgy

March 22, 2020

PREPARE

Locate a candle to light and communion elements to use (bread/juice or whatever is available to you).

Find a quiet place by yourself or with others.

Read through the instructions, prayers, scripture, and questions below. You can also find a guided, voice-led version of this digital liturgy at southelkhorncc.org/digital-liturgy

WELCOME THE LIGHT

Welcome to worship with South Elkhorn Christian Church. I am so glad that you are here. We begin our digital liturgy by lighting the Christ candle. Settle into a quiet place, take a deep breath to center your Spirit, and light a candle as you hear these words that we use in our children's worship and wonder: and they go like this when we light a candle ...

CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 95:1-7

Once there was someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people began to follow him.

But they didn't know who he was.

So one day they simply had to ask him.
And he said, "I am the light."
Let's enjoy the light.

CENTERING & LORD'S PRAYER

Loving and Gracious God,

During this time of uncertainty, we turn to you. We ask that you walk beside us on this journey, reminding us that we are not alone. We come to you because we need you and we love you. We know that you heard the cry of the blind beggar and we trust that you hear our cries as well.

You are the Great Physician and so we cry out for healing and wholeness for your world. We pray for those in the medical field and scientists as they are working long hours and putting their lives at risk, caring for your people. Give them strength, wisdom and knowledge during this time so bodies can be healed and restored. We pray for all those who are sick, lonely, and experiencing great anxiety. Hold them close and let them know you are with them.

God, this is all so new to us and having the world shut down and closed all around us, makes our spirit heavy. Like the blind beggar, we feel we have lost our sight and our spirit. Yet through this situation, we ask that you help us to open our eyes to notice the sunshine, the new life that is coming from the earth, the trees that are budding and the birds making new homes as they sing a beautiful lullaby. May our eyes be open to the miracles all around us.

And may we be a miracle to each other. God, we know that you gave sight to the man born blind, but you also opened his heart. Open our hearts wider, to reach out to each other, to family, friends, neighbors and even those we do not know. May our hearts share love and kindness as we explore new and creative ways to do so during this time.

Guide us God to be a people of faith and to share your compassion and light and love to all your children.

And now we come together to say the prayer that you taught us saying:

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but

deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

John 9:1-12

As he walked along, he 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.”

SERMON

It’s strange to read words about blindness and sight this week, maybe you know what I mean. There is so much we cannot see.

We cannot see how long this virus will circulate and wreak havoc on our lives, on our bodies, on our healthcare system. We cannot see what the toll will be on our bank accounts, on our jobs, on our families, on our loved ones.

We can’t hug, hold, and touch people we love--grandparents isolated from grandchildren to keep everyone as healthy as possible, and to help slow the spread of this devastating virus.

One of our church members visited her father recently in a care facility, his face in the window of his room as she leans in from the outside. Both of their hands were clasped in front of them, mirroring each other, hands that might prefer to hold one another, if only

they could touch.

I learned of a youth in our church whose grandfather is in a care facility and is struggling to find the motivation to get better because he can't see his wife who can no longer visit him and encourage him each day as she had done before.

I was hoping to see my mother-in-law last weekend. I couldn't wait for her to hold her newest grandchild, only a month old; I couldn't wait for her to meet him for the very first time; feel how soft his skin is, how tiny and warm he is, feel his little heartbeat next to hers. But not yet. Not now.

You have a story, too. A story of foregoing the game nights you love with friends or the big trip you had been planning for months or years. Stories of telling your grandchildren not to visit or your parents not to come over. Stories of being sent home from work wondering about your pay.

The world is changing in front of us. Rapidly. Bewilderingly.

I feel it deep in my soul. My heart is grieving all the loss. Maybe yours is too.

I miss you. I miss seeing your face on Sunday mornings. I miss the handshakes and hugs, the laughter and smiles.

Instead of all that I'm doing a church service recording in a dark, choir-room closet. A fitting symbol, I guess.

Blindness.

And yet Jesus wants us to see.

But maybe not the way we want. Not with answers that will dispel all the anxiety or clarify the contours of the future. Not with life hacks or clever tips that will get us back to where we were before.

There's no going back.

There's only through.

And Jesus invites us to see that we have what it takes to get through this--Jesus helps us see what we need: that God is with us in the dirt. And we are in this together. Things won't be the same, they can't be the same. And yet hope remains. It always remains. Usually in the most peculiar places...

It's interesting that the word for salvation shares a common root with the word for saliva. Both come from "salve" meaning to heal. It was thought that spit, saliva, could heal.

Jesus spits in the dirt, makes mud, and heals a man born blind from birth.

The dirt of coronavirus, economic disruption, and physical distancing can still be mixed with the healing presence of Jesus to help us see, perhaps even heal the ways we've been blind for so long, maybe our whole lives:

Blind to the love we take for granted.

Blind to the joy we sacrifice to get ahead, to make a buck, or to feel important.

Blind to the friendships, community, and connection we need.

Blind to a spiritual life we've let atrophy to our busyness.

Blind to the ways we really need our lives and our communities and our society to function in order to truly take care of people.

Blind to the those who suffer.

Blind to the gifts of our own creativity, our own strength, our own courage.

Blind to the power of our words to inspire and bless and heal.

Here we are in the dirt, blind.

And Jesus doesn't eliminate the dirt.

He makes mud with it.

Jesus never extracts us from our situation, he simply does something beautiful and new with it.

And so can you. So can we.

So let's do something beautiful and new together.

There are youth dropping off gift baskets of toilet paper on doorsteps with the note: I know this is a crappy day, but I hope this helps.

There are phone calls, texts, messages being made to friends, family, and church people who have not connected like this in a long time.

There are people figuring out how to have a game night with friends using video calls.

I worshipped with my family last Sunday. Together, all of us in ways we couldn't before because of my role on Sunday mornings. We were sitting and lying on the floor together, listening, loving, sharing communion together with juice and goldfish crackers, saying the words of the Lord's Prayer together.

Let's dig deep into prayer for one another.

Let's be church in new ways. Let's try new things.

This is a time to make mud with our dirt, to discover something about who we are, about who God is, about what the world can become when we learn to see differently.

Let's lean into each other and use whatever we can--phone calls, cards, videos, and pictures to keep connected. Not as a substitute for life in person, but as a reminder of that day when we gather together again, inescapably new by what we've been through. Maybe even re-newed.

COMMUNION

Place before you bread and a cup of juice (or whatever you have on hand to use). If you are

with others, serve one another with the blessing, “The bread of life, the cup of hope.”

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

The communion elements before you unite us in Christ’s Spirit one to another. Christ’s life, death, and resurrection unite us to God’s infinite and all-inclusive Love. All are welcome to the Table, and all are invited to remember...

THE BREAD

“The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it...”

Hold the bread and, if possible, break it.

“...and said, ‘This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.’”

THE CUP

Hold the cup. If you have not already, pour juice (or whatever you have on hand) into the cup.

“After supper, Jesus took the cup saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.’”

PRAYER

Gracious and Loving God, You have made us for connection. In this time of separation and isolation send to us your Spirit. That we might experience your sustaining presence and be encouraged with hope through the fellowship of your love. Amen.

Receive and prayerfully enjoy the bread and the cup.

GENEROSITY

Prayerfully consider someone to reach out to with a word of love, encouragement, or

prayer. Write a card. Make a phone call. Or identify a time to do so today (or in the week ahead).

Tithes and offerings can be mailed to South Elkhorn or you can give online at

southelkhorncc.org/give

CHANGING THE LIGHT

Now it is time to change the light. The light that was in one place at one time, is now in all places at all times.

In this very room and everywhere we go. And all God's children said, Amen.

Extinguish the candle and watch the smoke rise.

UPDATES

Visit southelkhorncc.org/blog to learn the latest on worship, building usage, and more.

Digital Worship & Wonder videos available at southelkhorncc.org/worship-wonder.

Subscribe to South Elkhorn's text messaging alerts by texting:

@southelk to the number 81010