

First Presbyterian Church Portsmouth, Ohio

The Rev. Lisa R. Eye, Pastor
Ms. Diane Boster, Liturgist
Ms. Michelle Imes, Director of Music
Dr. Phillip Roberts, Organist/Musician

The Wilderness is a Place of Mystery and the Unknown

*It is only in the wilderness that you can see the stars.
That's what city living has taught me.*

*We can shine a light on the things we want to see—
Fluorescent and bright, lighting up dark alleys.
However, it's only in the wilderness that you can see the stars.*

*And it's only in the dark of night that the questions come.
What is my purpose here?*

*What does God have to say to suffering?
The sun falls and my doubt rises.*

For it is only in the dark that the questions come.

*So like Nicodemus in the night,
I will throw my big questions at the sky.
And my voice will reverberate among the stars,
And my questions will echo throughout the dark.
For there in the night, my words form constellations.
And there in the wilderness, my prayers form galaxies.
So even there in the unknown, I trust that I am found.*

*A light shines in the darkness, friend. So if ever you're in the wilderness,
Look up and find the stars.*

GATHERING THE COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORD

<i>Welcoming the Community</i>		Elder Diane Boster
<i>Announcements & Celebrations</i>		Elder Boster
<i>Prelude</i>		Dr. Phillip Roberts
<i>*Call to Worship</i>		Elder Boster
All are welcome here— The young and old, those who have visions and those who dream dreams. All are welcome here— The sinner and saint, those who seek forgiveness and those who long for peace. All are welcome here— The hurt and the doubting, those who know the wilderness and those who feel lost. All are welcome here—for you are loved by God, and this is God's house. Let us worship God.		
<i>*Prayer of the Day</i>		Elder Boster
<i>*Hymn (see bulletin p. 5)</i>	<i>I Journey Through the Wilderness</i>	
<i>*Call to Confession</i>		Elder Boster
<i>*Prayer of Confession (unison)</i>		
God, we give you our hearts. They are brimming with doubt and are saturated with fear, but we give them to you anyway, for you promise to love us as we are. You promise to walk with us to the ends of the earth, so in this moment, we promise to tell the truth. God, you ask us to be brave and bold, but we cower in fear. You ask us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but we hold tight to privilege and the status quo. And you ask us to risk it all to follow you, but we are content with the injustices at hand. Forgive us for our sin and lift our eyes to you. Lift our eyes to the hills. Gratefully we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. <i>(silent confession)</i>		
<i>*Declaration of Forgiveness</i>		Rev. Eye
<i>*Response #581</i>	<i>Glory Be to the Father</i>	GTG
<i>*Sharing the Peace</i>		Rev. Eye
The Peace of Christ be with you all. And also with you.		

HEARING & PROCLAIMING THE WORD

<i>Prayer for Understanding</i>		Rev. Eye
<i>Scripture</i>	Psalm 121 The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.	
<i>Scripture</i>	John 3:1-17 The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.	

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

- *Hymn #418* GTG
Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling
- Invitation to the Offering* Elder Boster
- Offering Instrumental* Dr. Roberts
- *Doxology #606* GTG
Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow
- *Thanksgiving & Dedication (unison)* Elder Boster
Gracious God, we dedicate to you not only these gifts, but also ourselves, in deep gratitude—for your call on our lives, your guidance through the wilderness, and for blessing us that we may be a blessing to others. Accept what we bring for your own good purposes. In Christ we pray. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

- Invitation to the Table* Rev. Eye
- Great Prayer of Thanksgiving & the Lord’s Prayer*
The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**
Let us give our thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**
Holy One, in this dry and weary land we give you thanks and praise.... Even dry bones in the valley of death stand to sing your praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.
We give you thanks and praise for Jesus, our way in the wilderness.... Christ is the bread of life.
When we eat this bread and drink this cup
we proclaim the saving death of our risen Lord until he comes in glory.
Now pour out your Holy Spirit upon this bread.... As our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray: **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.**

The Communion of the People

Prayer After Communion Rev. Eye

CALL TO MISSION

**Hymn (next page)*

For God So Loved the World

A Hymn Inspired by John 3:16-17

Text: Stephen M. Fearing, 2020

Tune: DARWALL'S 148TH

Meter: 6.6.6.6.8.8

Music: John Darwall, 1770

Piano

1. For God so loved the world, God gave God's on - ly son,
2. For Christ did not des - cend u - pon us to con - demn,
3. Let's ce - le - brate the news that God has con - quered sin,
4. All praise to God a - bove for we are God's de - sign.

Pno.

4
that through him life is found and our sal - va - tion won.
but that we might be saved and live to fol - low him.
that e - vil forc - es all a - round no more may win.
Christ won the fight; let's share the light; may just - ice shine!

Pno.

8
With glad - some voice, give thanks to God for God is good! May all re - joice!

***Congregational Charge & Benediction**

Rev. Eye

***Sending Song #543**

God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me, verse 4

GTG

*Walking behind to hem my journey;
going ahead to light my way; and from beneath, above and always.
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me,*

Acolyte Recessional

Postlude

(Please be seated for the postlude.)

Dr. Roberts

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I Journey Through the Wilderness

A Paraphrase of Psalm 121

Text: Stephen M. Fearing, 2020

Tune: FOREST GREEN

Meter: CMD

Music: English Folk Melody; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

Piano

1. I jour - ney through the wild - er - ness; the hills de - light my eyes.
2. God will not let your foot be moved; your life, with love, She keeps.
3. Through thick and thin I've come thus far with God, my shield and shade.

4

Pno.

My feet u - pon this pil - grim path; my gaze u - pon the skies.
From day - break's dawn to ev - 'ning's dusk, God nei - ther rests nor sleeps.
Though trial and terror may roar and rage, with God I'm not a - fraid.

8

Pno.

My help is from the Lord, my God, who made things high and low.
The sun by day nor moon by night shall threat - en or im - pede,
My go - ing out and com - ing in are kept by God in grace.

12

Pno.

And though the way with risk a - bounds, She's there where'er I go.
for God will guide you as a friend and ne - ver you mis - lead.
In days gone by and days to come, I'm held in Her em - brace.

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The vocal line is written in a single treble clef staff, and the piano accompaniment is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is in 4/4 time and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The third system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The fourth system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands. The lyrics are: 1. I jour - ney through the wild - er - ness; the hills de - light my eyes. 2. God will not let your foot be moved; your life, with love, She keeps. 3. Through thick and thin I've come thus far with God, my shield and shade. 4. My feet u - pon this pil - grim path; my gaze u - pon the skies. From day - break's dawn to ev - 'ning's dusk, God nei - ther rests nor sleeps. Though trial and terror may roar and rage, with God I'm not a - fraid. 8. My help is from the Lord, my God, who made things high and low. The sun by day nor moon by night shall threat - en or im - pede, My go - ing out and com - ing in are kept by God in grace. 12. And though the way with risk a - bounds, She's there where'er I go. for God will guide you as a friend and ne - ver you mis - lead. In days gone by and days to come, I'm held in Her em - brace.

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We are glad you are here and want you to feel welcome as you share in worship!

*The asterisk indicates that worshippers are invited to rise in body or in spirit, as able.

Bold text indicates that the congregation is invited to speak.

GTG refers to *Glory to God*, the hymnal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

**THE PRAYER LIST IS POSTED ON THE BULLETIN BOARD
IN THE EDUCATION ANNEX**

Let us pray for our ability to be faithful disciples, family, and friends; our church, pastor, the session, deacons, committees, lay leadership, our ministry, outreach, and stewardship; the Boney Fiddle community and its churches, schools, the city of Portsmouth and its leadership, state and national leadership, and those who are incarcerated.

Church & Community Calendar for March/April

Sunday Worship at 11:00 a.m. and all other scheduled meetings are held in the Church Lounge during the Sanctuary Restoration

Wednesday, February 25 (and following Wednesdays through March 25): Lenten Supper & Bible Study at 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 4: MCL Meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11: Regular Session Meeting at 12:00 noon

Thursday, March 12: Armbrust Student Loan Committee Zoom meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 22: Regular Deacons Meeting following worship

Sunday, March 29: Palm/Passion Sunday

Thursday, April 2: Maundy Thursday Worship with Second Presbyterian Church (time TBA)

Sunday, April 5: Easter Day/Resurrection of the Lord

Church Contact Information

Church Office Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:00 am–4:00 pm

Virginia M. Stinnett, Admin. Aid/Church Secretary—Email: vstinnett.fpcport@gmail.com; Phone: (740) 353-4259

Bev Phipps, Treasurer—Email: bevphipp1stpres@gmail.com; Phone: (740) 353-4259

Rev. Lisa R. Eye, Pastor—Email: leyefirstpresportsmouth@gmail.com; Pastor's Study: (740) 529-7177

Rev. Eye ordinarily works from her home study on Mondays and observes Fridays as sabbath time.

In case of pastoral emergency, she may be reached at (859) 329-9026.



**First Presbyterian
Church**

221 Court St., Portsmouth, OH 45662

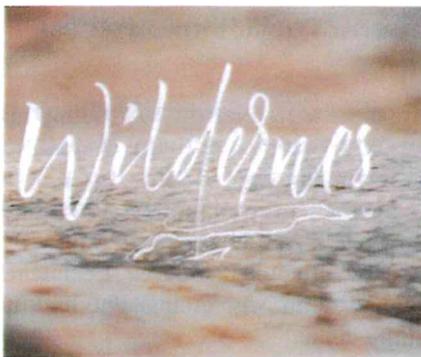
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Wilder + ness "state of the wild"

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God's love. Welcome to the wilderness journey.

2nd SUNDAY IN LENT

Sometimes the wilderness mystifies and scares us. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night, desperate for concrete answers to swallow up his doubt. Instead, Jesus offers him poetry and mystery, pointing him to the wilderness of the Spirit. The hymn of Psalm 121 reminds us of the power of song when trudging through difficult or perilous wilderness spaces. In the wilderness of seeking justice, our songs give us courage and strength to climb even the highest of hills.

Psalm 121 (NRSV)

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
² My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
⁴ He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

John 3:1-17 (NRSV)

³ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." ³ Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be

born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit." ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

¹¹ "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Guiding Questions

- *What is the physical or metaphorical wilderness in these texts?*
- *What does this scripture teach us about wilderness?*
- *How does the wilderness shape those who journey through it?*
- *Where is God in the wilderness?*

WILDERNESS SONG by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Psalm 121 | Graphic Image



Artist Statement: I grew up in the mountains. Narrow, ascending trails and sudden bluffs are the markings of my home. I spent my formative years getting lost in the woods, following the scent of pine, listening to bubbling brooks and taking in the breeze. This psalm of ascent reminds me of those days, and the ways in which the mountains were my sanctuary, my comfort, and the very dwelling place of God. Each leaf's unique shape taught me something new about who God is, and in turn, something about who God created me to be.

This psalm is a song for the wilderness. It begins with the assurance that the one who made heaven and earth and all in between will be your help. As you journey, your foot will not slip. Your feet will stay firm on the path, and though you will need rest, God will "neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). As you meet the blazing sun and the harsh cold of the night, God will be your shade, right by your side. The sun and moon will not strike you, but illuminate your way. The wilderness is dangerous; it wouldn't be wilderness otherwise, but God is not absent—though it may certainly feel that way. This psalm comes from that place of needing affirmation. God guides "your going out and coming in." We all enter and leave the wilderness throughout our lives, and God is always with us always.

I drew this mandala focusing on the first two verses in repetition. The land formations, waterways, and vastness of the universe proclaim God

providence and love. Just as the countless planets spin on their particular angle, and the inching worm finds its nourishment, each of us is held by the Maker of heaven and earth.

SPIRIT LED by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by John 3:1-17 | Graphic Image

Artist Statement: I could not see the forest for the trees. My child-bearing years were a time of wilderness for me. Having been a successful student, I looked for measurables to trace my failures and successes as a young mother. I read books, talked to friends, compared stories, and mentally tracked what worked and what did not with my little one. I struggled mightily with the fact that my measurable failures significantly outweighed my successes. I have since reimagined how I measure success and failure. Looking back, however, I can see that I was lost in the details. I was mired in measurables while I needed to be open to enjoying the fleeting days of babyhood. I could not enjoy those precious moments of infancy. I just remember babies crying, unable to comfort them. Each subsequent year has presented an onslaught of detail, so many that I have had to restructure my approach to my daily life. This shift has allowed me to move into a realm that is more like this idea that Jesus mentions in John 3:5-8: the idea of being born of the Spirit. It is not a profession of faith that allows one to live like the wind. Plenty of people who believe do not live such a life. Rather, it is a moment-by-moment intention to be aware of God's presence. It is a minute-by-minute appreciation for the amazing life we have been given. It is a deep breath and a slower paced walk. It is a freedom unparalleled. It is an ability to see the forest and the trees. This space in the Spirit is deep and wide. It is fleeting and ever present. Come, live a life born of the Spirit.



Wilderness

...is a place of mystery and the unknown

...requires trust

...feels like taking a walk in the dark

...is a place for the lost

...requires that we keep climbing

...is a place to meet God.