



First Presbyterian Church Portsmouth, Ohio

The Rev. Lisa R. Eye, Pastor
Mr. R. L. Mohl, Liturgist
Ms. Michele Imes, Director of Music
Dr. Phillip Roberts, Organist/Musician

The wilderness can be a place of disruption and disorientation, but also a place where we can be given a new perspective and begin the process of healing. Healing is indeed a wilderness journey. The story of the man born blind shows us that sometimes we get worse before we get better, as his journey requires mud across his eyes and plunging into a pool he is forbidden to touch.

The Wilderness Is a Place of Disruption

*My grandfather was a good man,
But he believed
That wilderness emotions
Were not to be seen.
Cry with the door closed,
Don't dwell on the negative.
Chin up, kid,
We've been here before.*

*My grandfather was a good man,
But I'd like to say—
The wilderness is here to interrupt your
previously-scheduled programming.*

*Like water in the desert,
And setting the slaves free,
The wilderness might be
The very thing we need,
The very thing we dream,
The very thing we plead
For.*

*I guess what I'm trying to say is—
It never seems appealing to let a bird*

*in the house,
But if you do,
Then you might as well
Open every window and door.*

*And if you do,
Then you just might find yourself
Basking in the light,
Dancing in the breeze,
Overwhelmed with the beauty
That an open door brings.*

*So, I'm opening my door
And inviting in the wind,
To rustle up my heart
And start over again.*

*For sweeping the truth under the rug
Has never gotten us far.
So may the wilderness be like a
Bird in your house.
Throw open your doors.
The truth must come out.*

--Poetry prayer by Sara Are | A Sanctified Art

GATHERING THE COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORD

<i>Welcoming the Community</i>		Mr. R. L. Mohl
<i>Announcements & Celebrations</i>		Mr. Mohl
<i>Prelude</i>		Dr. Phillip Roberts
<i>*Call to Worship</i>		Mr. Mohl
God is in the water that restores our soul. And God is in the night when we lose our way. God is in today and tomorrow, raising up leaders, prophets, and dreamers. And God is in the wilderness with us. So with confidence we declare— Jesus meets us here. For we too are the blind and the broken, the hurting and the bleeding. Jesus meets our scars, our fears, our prayers, and our dreams. So you are welcome here. All are welcome here. Let us worship God.		
<i>*Prayer of the Day</i>		Mr. Mohl
<i>*Hymn #624</i>	<i>I Greet Thee Who My Sure Redeemer Art</i>	GTG
<i>*Call to Confession</i>		Mr. Mohl
<i>*Prayer of Confession (unison)</i>		
Jesus, you came to bring light to the world and to open blind eyes. We confess that we are people who often love darkness rather than light. We often choose to keep our eyes closed. We turn away from injustice in our world, Worried that you might ask us to work for change. We close our eyes to our privilege, because the truth is uncomfortable. We avoid eye contact with those who are suffering in order to avoid their pain. We see the sin of others even as we fail to see our own. Forgive us, we pray. Guide us from the depths of our wilderness into your marvelous light. Amen. never thirst again. Amen. <i>(silent confession)</i>		
<i>*Declaration of Forgiveness</i>		Rev. Eye
The psalmist assures us that God's mercy will follow us, even pursue us, all the days of our life. Hear the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!		
<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

Prayer for Understanding

Rev. Eye

Scripture (responsively)

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² **He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;**

³ he restores my soul.

**He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.**

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,

**for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.**

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;

**you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.**

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,

**and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.**

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Scripture

John 9:1-41

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

The Wilderness:

The Rev. Lisa R. Eye

A Place of Disorientation, A Place of New Perspective

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

**Hymn (see p. 5)*

A Man Who Could Not See

**Affirmation of Faith (unison)*

We believe in a wilderness God—

**Who breathed life into dust,
turned seeds into flowers,
and flooded the sky with stars.**

We believe in a wilderness God—

**Who went hungry in the desert,
walked barefoot on the water,
and taught from the mountainside.**

We believe in a wilderness God—

**Whose love could be described
as nothing short of wild.**

So with confidence and hope, (cont.)

we long to follow our wilderness God
who walks with people on their darkest nights,
who sings hope into places of grief, isolation, and suffering,
and who exists in the form of untamed joy,
relentless love, and impossible hope.

Step by step, may it be so. Amen.

Prayers of the People & The Lord's Prayer

Rev. Eye

...Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, as together we pray as Jesus taught his disciples to pray, 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.**

Invitation to the Offering

Mr. Mohl

Offering Instrumental

Dr. Roberts

**Doxology #606*

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

GTG

**Thanksgiving & Dedication (unison)*

Mr. Mohl

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love; through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

CALL TO MISSION

**Hymn #649*

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

GTG

**Congregational Charge & Benediction*

Rev. Eye

**Sending Song #543*

God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me, verse 3

GTG

*Brightness of sun and glow of moonlight,
flashing of lightning, strength of wind,
depth of the sea to soil of planet:
O Christ, surround me; O Christ, surround me,*

Acolyte Recessional

Postlude

(Please be seated for the postlude.)

Dr. Roberts

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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.).

A Man Who Could Not See

LEONI 6.6.8.4 D ("The God of Abraham Praise")

1. A man who could not see re - ceived the gift of sight;
 2. Some lead - ers were dis - tressed and said it was a sin,
 3. O Christ, you are the light to all who fol - low you;

O Lord, you spoke and he be - lieved and saw the light.
 for it was on the day of rest that you healed him.
 you give to us the gift of sight— a new world - view.

His joy was great - er still than sight that was re - stored;
 They could not see the grace or — know how much God cares;
 When cul - ture hems us in with val - ues that de - stroy,

he saw, when you had made him well, that you are Lord.
 the lack of vis - ion in that place was tru - ly theirs.
 Lord, help your church to see a - gain your king - dom's joy.

Biblical Reference: John 9:1-41

Tune: Hebrew melody. Adapt. Thomas Olivers and Meyer Lyon, 1770.

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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 ad its leadership, state and national leadership, and those who are incarcerated.

Building Update: The first phase of the sanctuary work – the structural repair – is expected to be completed by the end of this week! That means that it will be safe to return to the Fellowship Hall for worship and other activities during the second phase – ceiling restoration, painting, and cleaning. Help is needed on Friday, March 27 at 10:00 a.m. to prepare the Fellowship Hall for worship beginning on Palm Sunday.

The Annual Yard Sale is April 23, 24 & 25. Table set up will take place after worship on Sunday, April 19 with organization of donations on April 20, 21 & 22 beginning at 9:00 am. Come when you can and work as long as you can. Lunch provided.



Presbyterians have participated in the One Great Hour of Sharing since it began in 1949 following World War II, when leaders of several denominations made appeals for relief and reconstruction in areas devastated by the war. Today, OGHS is the largest of the three church-wide special offerings in the PC(U.S.A.). As we celebrate the season of Lent, Presbyterians respond to Christ's call to ministries of compassion for the most vulnerable around the world who suffer due to disaster, hunger, poverty, climate change, and immigration/migration. The offering provides us a way to share

God's love with our neighbors in need by providing them with safety, sustenance and hope. The offering will be received on Easter Sunday. You can find "fish" coin boxes to collect your gifts, offering envelopes, and more information about how the gifts will be used on the table in the hallway. Thank you for prayerfully considering how we can *do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.*

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, March 18 & 25: Lenten Supper & Bible Study at 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, March 22: Regular Deacons meeting following worship
- **Friday, April 27: Cleaning & Set-Up Fellowship Hall for Worship**
- Sunday, March 29: Palm/Passion Sunday
- Thursday, April 2: Maundy Thursday Worship with Second Presbyterian Church at 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 5: Easter Day/Resurrection of the Lord/Communion
- Wednesday, April 8: Regular Session meeting at 1:00 p.m.
- Thursday, April 23 – Saturday, April 25: Annual Yard Sale in Fellowship Hall

Church Contact Information

- Church Office Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:00 am–4:00 pm
- Virginia M. Stinnett, Admin. Aid/Church Secretary—Email: vistinnett.fpcport@gmail.com; Phone: (740) 353-4259
- Bev Phipps, Treasurer—Email: bevphipps1stpres@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.



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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.

4th SUNDAY in LENT March 15, 2026

Healing is a wilderness journey. The story of the man born blind shows us that sometimes we get worse before we get better, as his healing journey requires mud across his eyes and plunging into a pool he is forbidden to touch. In the familiar words of Psalm 23, we find comfort in God's loving guidance even through the valley of the shadow of death.

Psalm 23 (NRSVue) A Psalm of David

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

John 9:1-4 (NRSVue) A man born blind receives sight

⁹ As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

² His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.

⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ 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, ⁷ saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ 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?" ⁹ Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." ¹⁰ But they kept asking him, "Then how were

your eyes opened?" ¹¹ 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." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

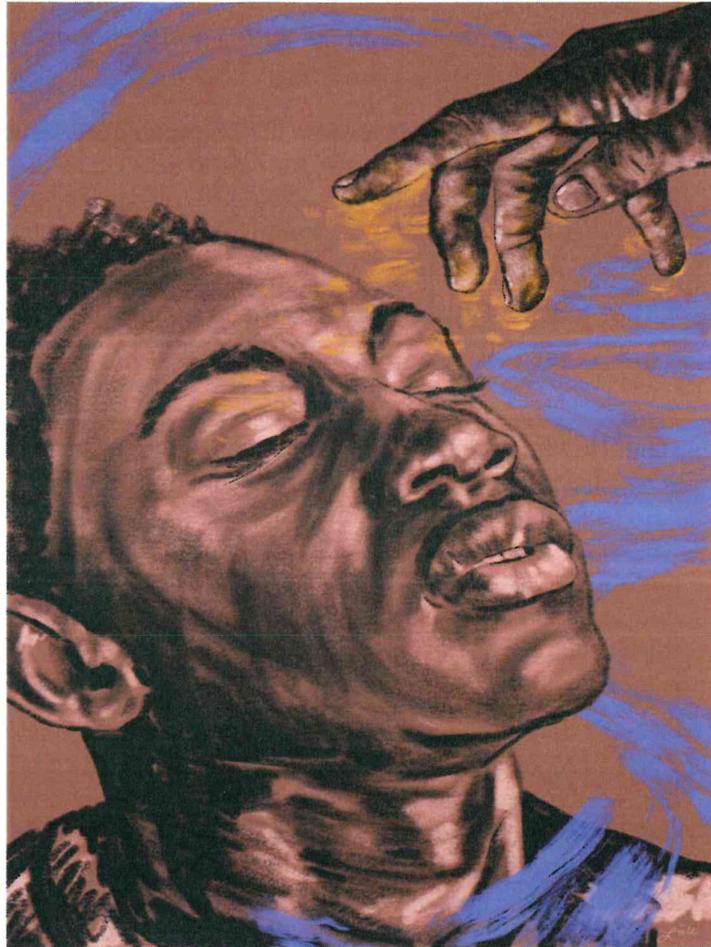
¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. ¹⁷ 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."

¹⁸ 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 ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" ²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ 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." ²² 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. ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

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

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



SILOAM

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 9:1-41 | Graphic Image

Artist Statement: The beauty and challenge of this story is that Jesus doesn’t heal alone. He invites the man to co-create with him, to be an active participant in his own renewal. There is no quick fix. Jesus doesn’t grant him sight through a profession of faith or tap on the shoulder. Instead, the man enters the messy wilderness of healing by enduring three stages of blindness—by birth, by mud, then by water—before he opens his eyes to the world of color and light. He must go deeper into his own personal wilderness—away from his healer, away from his accepted and familiar place outside the city. He must risk public shaming and social scrutiny in order to go into the city center—where he is both not allowed and yet sent—and submerge himself to a quick death of his old life, a death of his senses, a death of what was once all too familiar and all too hard.

When I place myself in the man’s shoes, I imagine myself receiving Jesus’ command to go—to go beyond what is familiar into territory unknown; to be an active participant in my own continual healing and transformation; to surrender myself to a death of sorts, one that forces me to submerge into God’s murky and living waters so I can once again be reborn and awoken to the world with new eyes.

In this image, the pool of Siloam surrounds and lures the man, like baptismal waters claiming his place in the family of things.

Wilderness

...is a place of disruption

...is disorienting

...gives us new perspectives

...is a place to participate in healing

Through the wilderness,

God shepherds and comforts us.