



**Middlebury Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**

**March 14, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Lent**

PRELUDE

Wayfaring Stranger American spiritual arr by Hugh Livingston

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Manzi

INVOCATION

LORD'S PRAYER (UNISON)

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass
against us.**

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.**

[We use "Father" and "trespasses," but please use whatever words bring you closest to God.]

CALL TO CONFESSION (based on John 3:19)

Rev. Manzi

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Merciful God, we confess the folly of our sin and the hypocrisy of
our complaints. We grumble about the evils in our world, even as we
participate and profit from injustice. We fret about the scarcity of
resources while hoarding the earth's goods. We protest the problems
of our world, but we do not work to actively address them. Merciful
God, expose our sins before the light of your grace. Heal our sin and
free us from our foolish ways that we may know the joy of eternal
life in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.**

(Time for individual silent confession)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON (based on John 3:17)

Hear the good news! God did not send the Son into the world to
condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through
him. Friends, hear and believe the good news of the gospel: in Jesus
Christ we are forgiven. Amen.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

READINGS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

Rev. Manzi

Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around
the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The
people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us
up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no
water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the LORD sent
poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that
many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have
sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD
to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.
And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a
pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses
made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent
bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

John 3:1-21

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 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." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I
tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from
above." 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?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the
kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of
the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be
astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' 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." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things
be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do
not understand these things?"

"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. If I have told you about
earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you
about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one
who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted
up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“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.

“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. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

SERMON

Rev. Manzi

Walking in the Dark

MUSICAL OFFERING

Wayfaring Stranger Folk Hymn, arr. by Richard Walters
Valerie Beard, soprano

Joys and Concerns and Pastoral Prayer

Katrina will share joys, concerns and witness to your brothers and sisters that she received prior to today's service.

OFFERING AND DEDICATION OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES

***BENEDICTION**

The Irish Blessing

*May the road rise up to greet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
And the rains fall softly your fields.
'Til we meet again,
May God hold you in His hand.*

BENEDICTION RESPONSE

POSTLUDE

Song of St Patrick

Gilbert Martin

DOING GOD'S WORK

The Congregation, *Ministers in the World*
Church Officers & Members of our Boards & Committees

Staff:

Katrina Manzi, *Minister*

Donna Obarowski, *Choir Director*

David Obarowski, *Organist*

Valerie Beard, *Christian Education Coordinator*

Jeanine Bonaventure, *Office Administrator*

Diane Barnard, *Asst. Treasurer*

Rebecca Trosan, *Nursery Attendant*

Howie Gay, *Sexton*