

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 15, 2026
United Church of Christ - Neillsville
Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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PRELUDE Ashley Volovsek

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARING OUR HEARTS TO HEAR THE WORD

HYMN: *"Gathered Here"* Phil Porter

#742 NCH (sing twice)

Gathered here in the mystery of this hour,
Gathered here in one strong body,
Gathered here in the struggle and the pow'r,
Spirit, draw near.

MEDITATION MOMENT

Through Light and Shadow - a Reflection on Psalm 23

RESPONSE: *"Come and Fill Our Hearts"*

#16 MV (sing twice)

Come and fill our hearts with your peace.
You alone, O God are holy.
Come and fill our hearts with your peace,
A- - - men.

CALL TO WORSHIP

When the world is dark and full of hate and fear,
when we cannot see God

we will turn on the light.

When we cannot find our way back to love and peace

we will turn on the light.

When our vision dims due to the darkness within

we will turn on the light.

Christ opens our eyes with the gift of sight.

The light of the world is Jesus Christ.

Come and worship the one
who brings sight to the blind.

Praise God, the light of the world!

OPENING PRAYER

Loving Shepherd, you know our names; you care for us. When we face darkness and death, walk beside us. When we hunger for your love, fill us with your presence. When we are fearful, feed us at your table.

May we dwell in the house of goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. Amen.

HYMN *"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"*

#93 W&R Rusty Edwards

**1 Praise the one who breaks the darkness with a liberating light;
praise the one who frees the prisoners, turning blindness into sight.
Praise the one who preached the gospel, healing every dread disease,
calming storms and feeding thousands with the very bread of peace.**

**2 Praise the one who blessed the children with a strong yet gentle word;
praise the one who drove out demons with a piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the one who brings cool water to the desert's burning sand;
from this well comes living water, quenching thirst in every land.**

**3 Praise the one true love incarnate, Christ, who suffered in our place;
Jesus died and rose for many that we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness, seeing what our God has done;
Praise the one redeeming glory;
praise the one who makes us one.**

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

Forgiving God, in a world filled with so much pain, we would rather shut our eyes and be blind than see things as they really are. Grant us the courage to face the reality of our world, and give us the strength to bring your light to those who walk in darkness. Help us see others as you see them, and forgive us when we do not trust you enough to open our eyes to the possibilities before us. Heal our self-inflicted blindness, O God, and lead us in the footsteps of the Light of the World, who reveals your glory in his life, his teachings, and his love. In his holy name, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

RESPONSE: *“Hold Us in Your Grace, O God”*

Lyrics: Keri K. Wehlander

Music: Bruce Harding and Keri K. Wehlander

Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.

Hold us in your grace, O God; hold us in your grace.

Hold us, hold us in your grace.

Hold us, hold us in your grace.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The Peace of God be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

RESPONSE: *“We Are Marching in the Light of God”*

#526 NCH *South African Song*

We are marching in the light of God,

We are marching in the light of God.

We are marching in the light of God,

We are marching in the light of God (light of God).

We are marching (marching, we are marching)

Ooo, We are marching in the light of God (light of God).

We are marching (marching, we are marching)

Ooo, We are marching in the light of God.

HEARING THE WORD

CHILDREN’S TIME *Barb Shoemaker*

SCRIPTURE READINGS *Byrl Buddenhagen*

NEW TESTAMENT **John 9:1-41**

¹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ² “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”

³ “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. ⁷ He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

⁸ His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn’t this the man who used

to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!”

But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!”

¹⁰ They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?”

¹¹ He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!”

¹² “Where is he now?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

¹³ Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, ¹⁴ because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. ¹⁵ The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!”

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

¹⁷ Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?”

The man replied, “I think he must be a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. ¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?”

²⁰ His parents replied, “We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we don’t know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³ That’s why they said, “He is old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, “God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner.”

²⁵ “I don’t know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!”

²⁶ “But what did he do?” they asked. “How did he heal you?”

²⁷ “Look!” the man exclaimed. “I told you once. Didn’t you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

²⁸ Then they cursed him and said, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! ²⁹ We know God spoke to Moses, but we don’t even know where this man comes from.”

³⁰ “Why, that’s very strange!” the man replied. “He healed my eyes, and yet you don’t know where he comes from? ³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. ³² Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he couldn’t have done it.”

³⁴ “You were born a total sinner!” they answered. “Are you trying to teach us?” And they threw him out of the synagogue.

³⁵ When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶ The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.”

³⁷ “You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”

³⁸ “Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

³⁹ Then Jesus told him, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”

⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”

⁴¹ “If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.”

SERMON *“Seeing is Believing”* Pastor Julie

HYMN *“Amazing Grace”*

#547 NCH (vs.1-4) John Newton

**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 Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.**

**4 My God has promised good to me,
Whose word my hope secures;
God will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.**

PRAYER OF COMMITMENT (Psalm 23)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;

We believe in the goodness of God.

We believe God hears and responds to our needs.

We believe God responds to all children everywhere.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters,

He restores my soul.

We are grateful that we've been blessed with enough water.

But we know that many do not have enough.

Not enough water, not enough food, not enough peace.

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

Too many children do not see God's righteousness.

Too many children watch violence, taste hunger, feel fear.

Too many children cry from the unspeakable horror of war.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me;

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

**To become involved is risky. Pain is often contagious.
Our hearts may be broken and our lives may be threatened.
Yet we hear God calling and we can no longer hide.**

You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Our steps may be small and timid. We may read a book, write a letter, or make a gift. But each tiny step is blessed by God and multiplies.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

God is more relentless than war.

God is more pervasive than hatred.

God is more insistent than despair.

Let us pray together as Jesus taught:

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

THE OFFERING SERVICE

Invitation to Generosity

Offertory

Doxology

**Praise God throughout these forty days;
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise;
And praise the Spirit who imparts
God's love in Christ into our hearts. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication

HYMN "Open My Eyes" Clara H. Scott
#480 W&R (vs. 1-2)

**1 Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth you have for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unlock and set me free.
Silently now, on bended knee,
ready I wait your will to see;
open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!**

**2 Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth you send so clear,**

**and while the message sounds in my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now, on bended knee,
ready I wait your will to see;
open my ears, illumine me,
Spirit divine!**

BLESSING

Open our Eyes by Jan Richardson

SHARING OUR BLESSINGS AND BURDENS

As we are gathered together as children of God, we are called to share our blessings and joys and our concerns, our deepest fears, sadnesses, griefs and needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.

SENDING OUT TO THE WORLD

HYMN "Open My Eyes" #480 W&R (vs. 3)

**3 Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere;
open my heart, and let me prepare
love with your children thus to share.
Silently now, on bended knee,
ready I wait your will to see;
open my heart, illumine me,
Spirit divine!**

BENEDICTION

Go into the world, carrying the light of Christ into the darkness!

We go, with hearts full and eyes open!

Receive God's love and care,
and share that love and care with others!

**We go, with eyes reflecting God's light
and hands open to share it!**

May you walk in the light of Christ
all the days of your life!

We will follow Christ wherever he leads us! Amen!

POSTLUDE

RADIO BROADCAST

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast
on WCCN 98.5FM and 1370AM**

This week's radio broadcast is sponsored anonymously "In Praise of Jesus Christ".

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
 We are glad that you have joined us on site, through the internet or on the radio.
 We pray that you will hear God's call, seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube link for Sunday, March 15, 2026
<https://youtube.com/live/9TZzT7rUV7s>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, March 15th

- 9:30 AM Worship

- Deacon – Sally Sadowska
- Greeters – Sandy Bieneck & Michelle Bergemann
- Ushers – Hap Eddy, Craig Heck, Calvin Heck
- Power Point – Brynn Heck
- AV –Stephanie Heck

FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint/AV it is suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the church service to get the laptop turned on, allow for any updates, get screen down and start running the announcements).

Following Sunday, March 22nd

- Deacon – Karlene Wallace
- Greeters – Carole Romens, Jenny Erickson
- Ushers – Don Quicker, Jerry Quicker
- Power Point – Barb Petkovsek
- AV –Lydia Schumacher

Monday, March 16th

-9:00 AM Card Making

Tuesday, March 17th

- 1:00 PM Bible Study**
- 5:30 PM Trustees Meeting**

Wednesday, March 18th

- 3:30 PM Confirmation Class**
- 5:00 PM JAM held at Calvary**
- 6:00 PM – viewing the "Chosen" at Calvary**

**Coffee fellowship after worship -
 Sign up on back bulletin board**

- Mar 15 – Mathis'
- Mar 22 – Weyer & Hamm
- Mar 29 – Voss'

We need people to sign up

Volunteers Needed for Sunday Worship

March 15 – April 5, 2026

We are looking for volunteers to assist with Sunday worship by **reading the scriptures and/or leading the children's message**. Pastor Julie will choose the scripture readings, and volunteers will prepare and lead the children's message. Pastor Julie has online resources available and is happy to discuss ideas or offer guidance.

If you feel called to help, please add your name to the schedule below. For more specifics of questions please contact Sally Sadowska or Janice Miller.

Thank you for serving!

Sunday	Scripture	Children's message
Mar. 15	Byrl Buddenhagen	Barb Shoemaker
Mar. 22	Nancy Rodman	Debbie Perkl
Mar 29 (Palm)	Marla Raine	
April 5 (Easter)	Susie Karl	



A precursor -the first robins of Spring