



Bedford Presbyterian Church

First Sunday in Lent
February 21, 2021 at 10 AM

Worship-at-a-Distance Format

GATHERING TOGETHER

Chimes

Gathering Music

Jennifer Chew, soloist

Welcome and Announcements

Pastor John Sawyer

PREPARING FOR THE WORD

Call to Worship¹ (Responsive)

Elder Larry Cowen

God meets us in the night —

Before the sun rises, before the wound heals, before there are answers, before there is closure.

God meets us in the light —

Where joy is effervescent, where laughter is contagious, where flowers bloom from cracks in the sidewalk, and where people gather around the table.

God meets us at the threshold —

At the edge of the water, at the beginning of the wilderness, at the start of something new, on the edge of faith.

And if God meets us in all those places, then surely God meets us in between —

Staying with us through the wilderness.

We are not alone. God is all around.

Let us worship the God of the here and now.

Hymn # 401 (see below)

“Here in This Place”

GATHER US IN

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon (Responsive)

God who meets us where we are — There is nowhere we can go that you are not.

You were with Jesus at his baptism. You were with him in the wilderness, and even in between, you were there, saying aloud, “This is my beloved.”

We know that you are with us too — In the good, the bad, and everything in between, but so often we act like we are alone.

Instead of coming to you with our hurt, we hold it in or cast it onto others.

Instead of coming to you with our joy, we credit ourselves and offer you nothing.

How can we long for a deeper relationship with you while living like you are nowhere to be found?

Forgive our self-centered ways. Remind us that in every breath, in every step, you are there.

You are the God who meets us where we are.

Before and behind, above and below, within and around. Amen.

¹ Some of the prayers and readings in today's services are by The Reverend Sarah Are and adapted and used with permission from A Sanctified Art, LLC.

Family of faith, if you hear nothing else today, hear this: God is here. God sees you. God knows you. God meets you at the edge of every new beginning. And God calls you beloved.

We are washed by the water. We are called beloved. Thanks be to God for a love like that.

Sung Response (Hymn # 581)

GLORIA PATRI

***Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.***

ENCOUNTERING THE WORD

Children's Sermon

Pastor John Sawyer

Prayer for Illumination

Elder Larry Cowen

First Scripture Reading

Mark 1:9-15

Listen now for the Word of God.

Our ears are open. . .

Second Scripture Reading

Psalm 25:1-10

Pastor John Sawyer

. . . The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"A New Beginning"
(A Prayer for Starting Over, Again and Again)

Pastor John Sawyer

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Hymn # 775 (see below)

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

WALK WITH ME

Statement of Faith – from A Sanctified Art

Deacon Andrea Martel

We believe in a God who is everywhere and right here, bigger than the sky and in the smallest details, all at once and in every moment. We believe that God meets us where we are — in heartbreak and high hopes, around crowded tables and in quiet homes, in joy and in suffering, in loneliness and in connection, in sanctuaries and in living rooms, in marches and in waiting rooms. We believe that nothing we do or leave undone can distance us from God's love. God is forever drawing us close and pulling us in. Again and again, God meets us where we are and invites us into wholeness. Thanks be to God for a love like that.

Call for the Offering

Deacon Andrea Martel

Offertory

"Ave Maria"
Jennifer Chew, soloist

Schubert

*At this time, you are invited to offer your tithes and offerings,
by writing a check and putting it in an envelope to the church,
or through our church's online giving website
(<https://bedfordpresbyterian.org/giving/one-time-gifts-pledges/>),
or by scanning this QR code and making a donation.*



*Your giving has a direct impact on the ministry and mission
of Bedford Presbyterian Church! Thank you!*

Song of Response (Hymn # 606)

OLD HUNDREDTH

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all people here below;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.***

Prayer of Dedication (Unison)

Deacon Andrea Martel

God of steadfast love and faithfulness, we are humbled as we try to do what is right and to walk in your ways. Receive, we ask, these offerings, and use them for your own good purposes in the church and in all creation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer ("debts/debtors")

Pastor John Sawyer

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.

GOING FORTH IN GOD'S NAME

Hymn # 166 (see below) "Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days"

ST. FLAVIAN

Charge and Benediction and Peace

May the peace of Christ be with you.
And with you.

Closing Song

NORTHUMBRIA MORNING BLESSING

***May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever he may send you.
May he guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm.
May he bring you home, rejoicing, at the wonders he has shown you.
May he bring you home, rejoicing, once again into our doors.***

Postlude



Liturgists and Leaders in today's worship service –

The Reverend John Sawyer, Pastor
Mrs. Barbara Flocco, Director of Music
Elder Larry Cowen, Liturgist
Deacon Andrea Martel, Liturgist
Jennifer Chew, Special Music
Marc Murai, Elder Michael Chen, and Kirk Wilson, Sound and Video Technicians
Members of our IT and Communications Committee and Covid-19 Task Force

Information on ways to access audio and video versions of today's service can be found at www.bedfordpresbyterian.org.

Here in This Place

401

Gather Us In



1 Here in this place the new light is stream-ing; now is the dark-ness
 2 We are the young, our lives are a mys-tery. We are the old who
 3 Here we will take the wine and the wa-ter; here we will take the
 4 Not in the dark of build-ings con-fin-ing, not in some heav-en,



van-ished a-way; see in this space our fears and our dream-ings
 yearn for your face. We have been sung through-out all of his-tory,
 bread of new birth. Here you shall call your sons and your daugh-ters,
 light years a-way: here in this place the new light is shin-ing;



brought here to you in the light of this day.
 called to be light to the whole hu-man race.
 call us a-new to be salt for the earth.
 now is the king-dom, and now is the day.



Gath-er us in, the lost and for-sak-en; gath-er us in, the
 Gath-er us in, the rich and the haugh-ty; gath-er us in, the
 Give us to drink the wine of com-pas-sion; give us to eat the
 Gath-er us in and hold us for-ev-er; gath-er us in and



blind and the lame; call to us now, and we shall a-wak-en;
 proud and the strong; give us a heart, so meek and so low-ly;
 bread that is you; nour-ish us well, and teach us to fash-ion
 make us your own; gath-er us in, all peo-ples to-geth-er,



we shall a-rise at the sound of our name.
 give us the cour-age to en-ter the song.
 lives that are ho-ly and hearts that are true.
 fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

The "you/your" mentioned in every stanza is never identified, but this 1979 hymn is clearly a corporate prayer to God on behalf of the diverse congregation who have assembled for worship, longing to be transformed and used as God's witnesses and for God's purposes.

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me 775

1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;
 2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
 3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

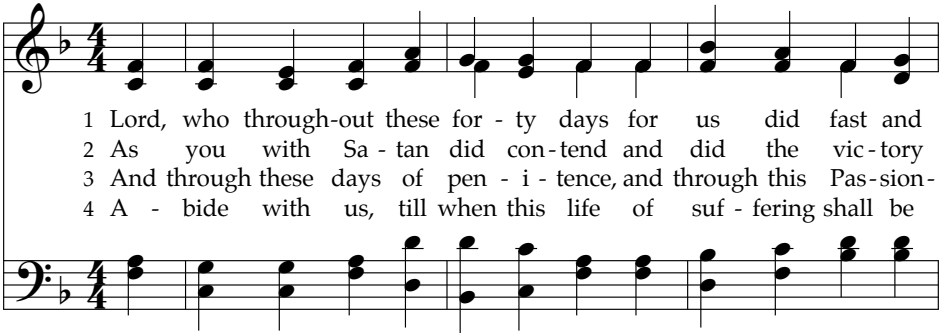
I want Je - sus to walk with me;
 in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me;
 when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,
 when my heart is al - most break - ing,
 when my head is bowed in sor - row,

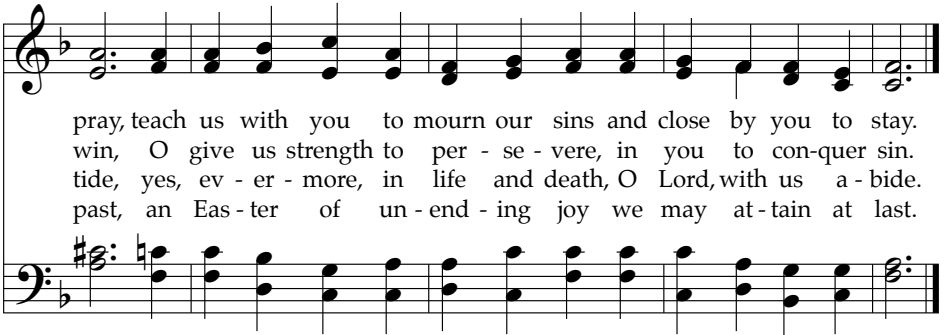
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.
 Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

The two equal phrases in each line suggest that this African American spiritual shares some characteristics of work or field songs that were used to coordinate the efforts of slaves involved in tasks (road clearing, ditch digging, etc.) that needed combined rhythmic strokes.

Lord, Who throughout These 166 Forty Days



1 Lord, who through-out these for - ty days for us did fast and
 2 As you with Sa - tan did con - tend and did the vic - tory
 3 And through these days of pen - i - tence, and through this Pas - sion -
 4 A - bide with us, till when this life of suf - fering shall be



pray, teach us with you to mourn our sins and close by you to stay.
 win, O give us strength to per - se - vere, in you to con - quer sin.
 tide, yes, ev - er - more, in life and death, O Lord, with us a - bide.
 past, an Eas - ter of un - end - ing joy we may at - tain at last.

Like many of this author's hymns, this text was written primarily for children but works equally well in reminding adults how Lent connects us with Christ's temptation in the wilderness and prepares us for Easter. The 16th-century English psalm tune provides sturdy support.