

March 15, 2026

John 9:1-41

Restored

One of the most haunting questions in John comes when after Jesus restores the sight of a man born blind and the Pharisees begin asking, “Surely, we are not blind?”

From the very beginning of this healing story, there’s much debate and misinformed assumptions from the community, including Jesus’ disciples, as all wonder whose sin was responsible for the man’s affliction: His own or his parents? Curses and blessings pave much of the Old Testament theological road, so it was popular belief that when bad things happened it was because of something you or a family member did or didn’t do.

Jesus announces, though, the blindness was no one’s sin, and with a little divine spit rubbed onto the man’s eyes, Jesus heals him. The man returns from washing his eyes in the Pool of Siloam, which means “sent,” as Jesus instructed him to do. He returns with eyes that see everything vividly, even the truth of who Jesus is — the Holy One of God.

Skepticism prevails, though, and the Pharisees relentlessly question the man. It is then that Jesus makes the comment that he came into the world so that those who do not see may see, and those who do may become blind. He said it loud enough for the educated religious elite to hear. And when they do, they wonder, “Surely, we are not blind?”

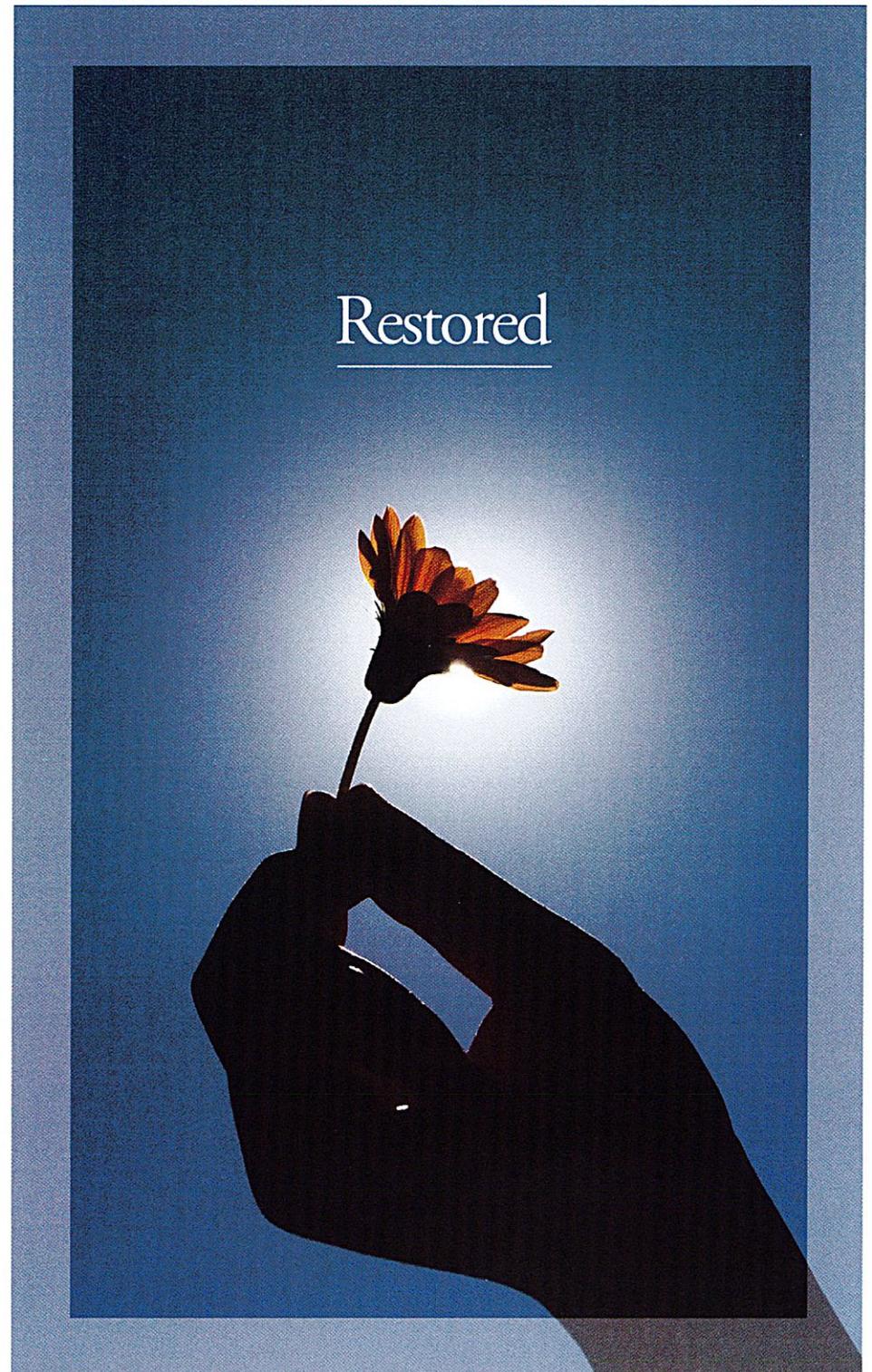
Surely, I am not blind. Surely, you are not blind. We can see clearly what is right and what is wrong in the world, correct? Surely, we can see with the restored eyes of the blind man not only the beautiful blues in the sky and the lush greens in the meadows but the power and majesty of Christ among us.

The question of blindness is a haunting one because it reminds us that often we see only what we want to see, and we believe only what we want to believe. Like the Pharisees, none of us are free from misinformed assumptions and inherited prejudices and stymying skepticism.

How then do we gain our spiritual sight? I suppose it starts by allowing this question to haunt us. For only when we begin to ask if we ourselves are blind will we begin to admit that we need corrective spiritual lenses.

All-knowing and all-seeing God, heal us from our own blindness that keeps us from seeing the world with the eyes of Jesus. May this day we regain our spiritual sight to see those who are hungry, who hurt, and who are lonely. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today’s Sunday Bulletin.)



St. John's Grace United Church of Christ

1000 S Rolling Road, Catonsville, Maryland 21228

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 15, 2026 11:00 AM

Vision Statement:

Our vision is to be a community of faith and a voice of hope following Jesus' way of love and service.

www.stjohnsuccmd.com

Nursery care is available during service for young children.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

+ Please rise in body or in spirit Congregation reads text in *bold italic*.

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Welcome and Announcements

Centering Prayer and Silence

In the name of Compassion, the embodiment of Peace, the incarnation of Mercy, we turn ourselves to you, we hear your Word, we see the Radiance of your face. Our whole being resonates with your Truth. May we open ourselves to your Presence, now and always, here and in every place we travel. Let our every step recognize the holiness of the realm in which we live. Let our every word express the sacred covenant we hold in our hearts with you. Amen.

Silent Meditation

Lighting of the Presence Candle

In lighting this candle, we acknowledge that:
God is here, now, everywhere, always.

+Invocation and Call to Worship

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For heavenly peace and the salvation of our souls let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the things we fail to do, for the separation we cause, for all the ways we fail to express your love,

Lord, have mercy.

For peace in the whole world, the stability of God's People and for the oneness of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this church, and all who enter it with faith and reverence, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For everyone in ministry that serves, for all clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For our country, and everyone in public service, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this city, for every city and land, and for the faithful who live in them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For good weather, abundance from the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who travel, by land, sea and air, for those who are sick or suffering or in captivity, and for their safekeeping, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

That we may be spared all affliction, violence, danger and want, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us and keep us, O God, in Your grace.

+Opening Hymn:

Open Our Eyes

FWS #2086

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Let us pray together:

May we roam on the mountains of your presence, listening to the sermon of the blessed, hearing the gentle urging of the wind, feeling the movement of spirit, seeing the pure heart

that waits, for the revelation of Christ in every face. Help us to study the oneness in your eyes, the thunder and groaning power of the words you choose to speak to us. Help us with ears that listen and eyes that see. May we choose love as a path through every pain, kindness as the fulfillment of every action, mercy with every confrontation, grace for every confused moment in our lives. From the mountains may the cool breath of spirit lift our feet as we travel a path without fear, and beyond anxiety to the presence of others to serve those in need. May we worship in spirit and truth, and when thirsty, drink from the living water you bring us, the water gushing up to eternal life. Amen.

Words of Grace

Jesus has told us, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." We can trust in the power of God's grace in every place and time. Amen.

+Passing of the Peace

Departure to Church School

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

The Hebrew Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Ministry of Music: Go, Light Your World Chancel Choir

+The Gospel Reading John 9:1-41

Reflection: Rev. Jeff Munnis

Hymn of Reflection: We Are Marching in the Light of God NCH #526

WE OPEN OURSELVES TO GOD IN GRATITUDE AND PRAYER

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

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, forever. Amen.

WE SHARE OUR GIFTS

Invitation to Generosity:

God calls us by name and sends us as light to the world. Like John who pointed beyond himself, and like the servant called to gather and restore, we offer not to draw attention to ourselves; we make our offering as witness to God's love at work among us. In gratitude for the gifts we have received, and in hope for the light God is still bringing into the world. Amen.

Your generous offerings are appreciated and used for continuing the missions of this church.

For electronic giving, a QR code is available in the pews or in your bulletin at the end of the printed worship service.

+Doxology

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God, for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One. Amen*

WE GO OUT TO LIVE AND TO SERVE

+Commission and Blessing

Our worship has ended. Our service begins.

What does God need from us?

Simply do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

Continue to serve with faith and love, depart from this time today committed to sharing the best of yourself, through extravagant generosity of time and resources, meeting the needs of others, both spoken and unspoken, seen and unseen, heard and unheard.

We will go now seeking justice, sharing compassion, and promoting hope in the world.

My dear friends in faith, will you go into your worlds to be people of God in Christ's name?

We will. Amen!

+Closing Hymn: Lead On, O Cloud of Presence FWS #2234

+Benediction:

We welcome you this morning, and invite you to return, and worship with us every Sunday morning at 11:00 AM

For your convenience you can scan our QR code to contribute electronically.



Church School every Sunday

Calling all children! We invite you to share in worship together with your children at the 11:00 am service. After opening hymns and prayers, the children depart for Church School for the remainder and continue learning about God's Word through storytelling, hands-on activities and fellowship.



One Great Hour of Sharing is a vital special mission offering of the United Church of Christ, connecting you to disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development efforts around the globe. When disasters strike or people are displaced, OGHS ensures immediate response and ongoing recovery. Your contributions help meet urgent needs and address the root causes of vulnerability, ensuring long-term, sustainable solutions for affected communities.

Thank you for your donations!

Name Tags for Members and Friends!

Members and friends are asked to wear name tags for worship time because they help other people. It is also helpful for folks who may know the face but not the name of another. Wearing a name tag is voluntary but shows that you care about others.

If you need a name tag, please ask a greeter or usher at the welcome desk to fill out a badge request slip!

Lost and Found:

We have over ten pairs of glasses, 3 water bottles and one hat that have found their way into the office after services. If you or someone you know is missing one of the above, please stop by today before we pass them on.

*St. John's Grace United Church of Christ
Stjohnsuccmd.com
410-744-5700
welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org*

*Senior Pastor and Interim Minister: Rev Jeff Munnis
Email: revjeffmunnis@stjohnsgraceucc.org
Office Manager: Barbara Burck
Email: barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org*

Connections...

Connecting our community through prayers, thoughts, and actions – no matter where we are today!

WE HOLD in LOVE and PRAYER:

Please keep these friends and loved ones in your prayers! If there is someone you would like added to our list, let Pastor Jeff or Barbara know. The church email is welcome@stjohnsgraceucc.org.

Those added to the prayer list will remain for three months before being removed. If prayers need to be continued for another three months, please let Barbara know your request.

Continuing Prayers

Lois Benson
 Family of Audrey Sears Knofski
 Luanne Schaeffer
 Herb Dement
 Kathy Collins
 Family of Dr. Mary ‘Tessie’ Behrens
 Kathy Crout
 Family of Sharon Hamilton
 Lois Hotchkiss
 Adrian Kavanaugh
 Phyllis Dean

Serving Our Country

Michael Barbarino Joe Clark
 Andrew Robey Jon Fuller
 Ty Smith Jay Robey
 Tom Myers Josh Tullius
 John Howard Jason Shoemaker

Hospice

Assisted Living

Doris Bush
 Virginia Hoffman

Our prayers and sympathies to Michele Rolf on the passing of her aunt, Audrey Knofski last week.

Keep Lois & Jim Benson in your prayers as Lois recovers from her back surgery last Tuesday.

Upcoming Meetings & Events

Ministries Council Mtg	Tues, Mar 17 th	6:30 pm	Zoom
Board of Trustees Mtg	Tues, Mar 17 th	7:30 pm	Zoom
Lenten Soup & Spirituality	Wed, Mar 18 th	6:00 pm	Parlor
Fundraising Meeting	Tues, Mar 24 th	6:00 pm	Zoom
Serving At Westside	Tues, Mar 30 th	See sign up	
Maundy Thursday Worship	Thurs, Apr 2 nd	7:00 pm	Sanctuary
Good Friday Worship	Fri, Apr 3 rd	7:00 pm	Sanctuary
Vacation Bible School	June 22 – 28 th	Save the Date!	

Governing Body Minutes

Our governing body consists of the Board of Trustees and the Ministries Council. Meetings are held monthly via Zoom. Interested parties are welcome. Minutes of the meetings are posted in the office hallway. Contact the office if you would like a paper copy or email copy.

View Past Services on our Website

If you missed a worship service here at St. John’s Grace, you can now view the service on our website!

Go to www.stjohnsuccmd.com Worship/ Online Worship tab and scroll down to the service you would like to view. They are on our YouTube channel so you can subscribe if you like.

Deadline for Submitting Announcements

Announcements or changes to announcements need to be submitted by noon on Tuesday prior to the Sunday service to be included in the bulletin. Email to barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org.



Westside Men’s Shelter Mission – Now Serving

We will again be serving lunch and dinner to the men at Westside Shelter! We will also be needing donated cakes to be shared with the men. **The date will be Monday, March 30th.** For serving lunch, arrive at the shelter by 11:30 am. For serving dinner, arrive at 5:30 pm. Desserts are due at church by Sunday, March 29th. The signup sheet is on the bulletin board in the Narthex.



EASTER FAMILY FUN

Every Bunny Welcome! Hop on down for special fun and hospitality in Fellowship Hall at 10:00 AM prior to worship Easter morning, April 5th. There will be an egg hunt, crafts, music, games and snacks! ...and if we are lucky – a special guest!

Forty Days – Forty Items

Wednesday, February 18th was the first day of Lent. I have a challenge for you! Each day of Lent, remove one item from your closet that you no longer wear or need and put it into this trash bag. At the end of the forty days, donate these items to our Turnkey Shed located at the end of the church parking lot. They will be shared with someone who really needs them!

*Remember Turnkey Policies: Please – **no** rags, fabric scrapes, toys, or household goods.*

See the basket in the narthex to pick up a bag.

Thank you for your support! The Missions Committee

Calling all VBS Volunteers!

Make a note – our VBS is planned for the end of June this year. If you have volunteered before, you know how much fun it is to share and teach the children!

Please let Tina and Michele know where you would like to help. We welcome everyone to plan to help during our

‘Snowball Mountain Challenge’ with Ollie the Arctic Seal!

CEA: March continues with SNACKS and DESSERT!

No Candy Please!

Snacks: Cookies, Crackers, Nuts, Protein Bars, Chips, Pretzels

Desserts: Cake Mix, Brownie Mix, Muffin Mix

Soup Totals: *Thank you for everyone’s generous donations.* In 2025 the total was 653. Counting the cans and donations, we were able to pass last year’s total with 725!

As usual, CEA welcomes ANY food, at any time!

CEA can use any donations so please pick up whatever you can for our neighbors!

When Faith Goes to Market – It Always Takes a Basket!



Lenten Soup and Spirituality

Join us on the following Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in the parlor as we gather for delicious soup dinners, fellowship, and spiritual reflections and discussions which will focus on our Lenten themes of Awareness, Turning, Surrendering, and Emptying. We hope you can join us!

February 25 - Awareness of God

- When did you first become aware of God and God’s presence? What was your experience?

March 4 - Turning Toward God

- Was there a time in your life when you were turned away from God? What was that like for you? Was there a person or an event that changed you in some way and helped you turn toward God?
- How would you describe the difference between your life before vs. your life after the turn?

March 11 - Surrendering to God

- What does it mean for you to surrender to God? Are there times you do this well, and other times that you don’t? What gets in the way? Is there anything that would help you surrender more fully?

March 18 - Emptying Ourselves to Receive God

- Imagine being completely emptied of all personal thoughts and desires. You have been born anew and are in a state of complete openness, ready to be filled with God’s love and presence. What do you feel when you imagine this?

Signing up in the narthex helps us make sure we have enough bread and soup. All are welcome!