

Powerful Witness

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

With that opening verse, Psalm 23 soars to the top of the greatest psalms of all time chart, becoming words whispered when lonely shadows are our only friends or when a sea of mourners need a blessed balm for broken hearts.

Psalm 23 is our perennial witness of the powerful truth that with the Lord we do not need anything else. But as popular as the psalm is, have you ever stopped to truly understand what the psalmist was saying about this incredible provision of love? For example, what does it mean to have a table prepared for us in the presence of our enemies?

Personally, I would not welcome such a dinner party in my life. But understanding ancient Middle Eastern culture helps us see better what God is up to for the host of a meal was not just offering a delectable leg of lamb. The host, through the meal, was offering protection for the guest that was invited. Once a seat was taken at the host’s table, no enemy was allowed access to the guest. So that table prepared for us among all our enemies is God saying, “I got you. In the presence of danger, no harm will come to you because you are at my table.”

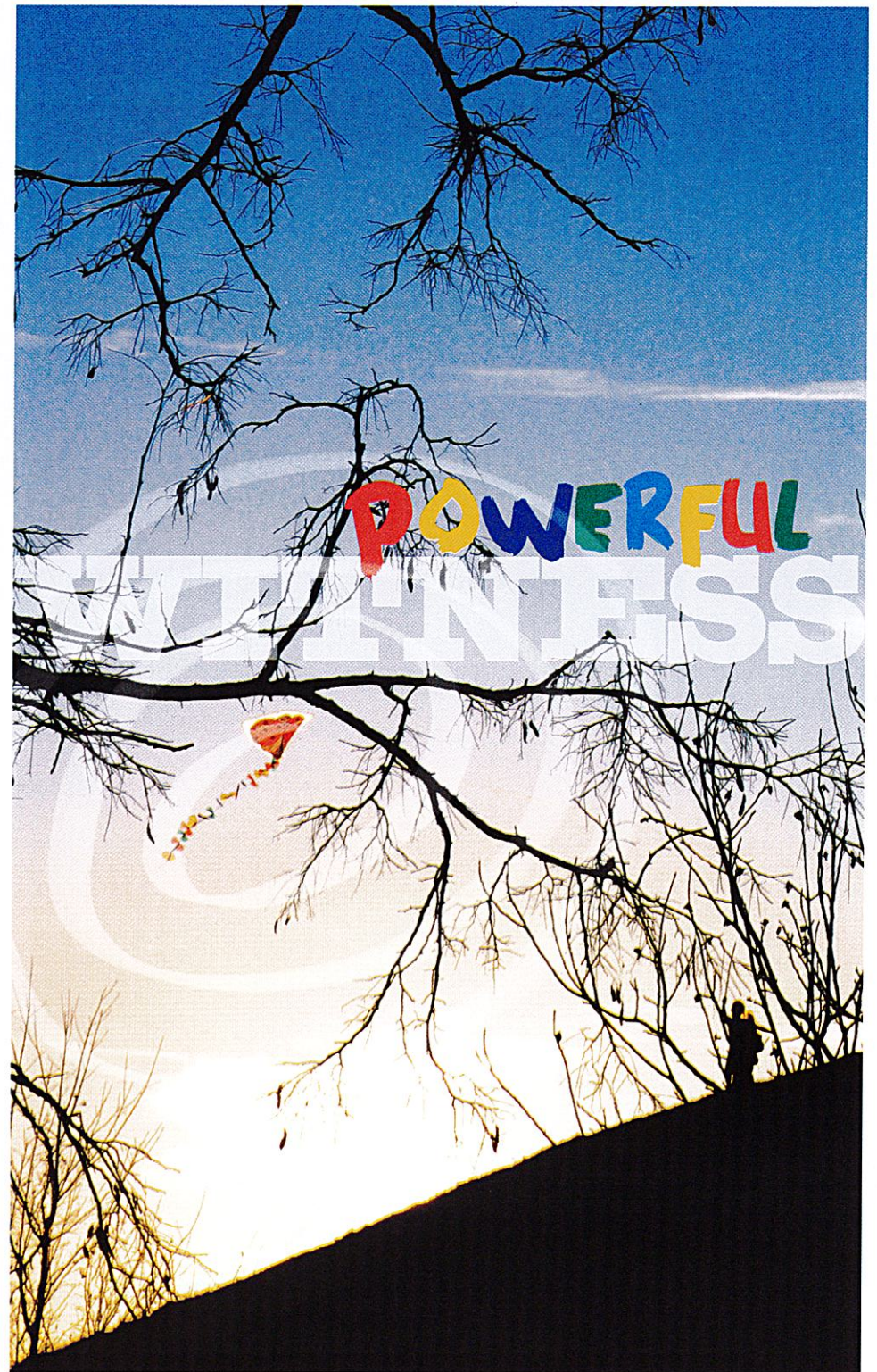
While we are here unpacking familiar verses, let’s take a closer look at the Lord anointing our head with oil. Yes, anointing one’s head is a symbolic act of consecrating a person chosen by God, and we are all chosen — called — by God to care for one another. But anointing with oil was also a common practice among shepherds for their sheep. The oil would be poured on the sheep’s head to act as a barrier against pesky flies. The oil would also act as a soothing balm, helping to heal scratches on the sheep’s head from either branches, thorny brush or the occasional head-butting from another sheep.

So, when we hear the Lord anoints our heads, he is not just setting us aside for the holy work of loving our neighbors. He is providing us with a barrier against those proverbial buzzing insects and confrontational head-butts in life, because such annoyances just don’t happen to sheep, do they?

Yes, the Lord is our shepherd. With him, we lack nothing. His protection of us is abundant.

*Shepherding God, it is a joy and a privilege to be part of your Son’s flock. We thank You for the constant care You give us each day. May we never take such love for granted. 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 of Easter**

**April 26, 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.

## ***Mission Statement:***

We serve God as Christ called us, to love our neighbor and minister to everyone. We welcome you to join us no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey.

[www.stjohnsuccmd.com](http://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**

Hear the words of Jesus, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Anyone who abides in me, and I in that person, is the one who bears much fruit. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you." These things have been spoken to us so that the joy of Christ may be in us and that our joy will be complete. 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**

Who among us hears the cry of the poor?

***How many open their hearts and heed the Call?***

The plight of the world is a wound to the very heart of Love.

***Blessed are those that lovingly respond.***

There is a new song in my heart, a song of praise to the Beloved.

***May we see and rejoice, may we put our trust in Love.***

What joy to live in Oneness with You.

***If we proclaim Your beauty and grace, who could measure it?***

We tell the glad news of Love's way to all who will listen.  
***We tell of Love's grace within our hearts and we speak of Love's healing power.***

**+Opening Hymn:** Savior Like A Shepherd Lead Us    NCH #252

#### **Morning Prayer**

We come before you Holy One, in this sacred season of Easter, knowing that we must humbly ask for your help and grace: We have given in to illusions, we have trouble with taking responsibility, we make mistakes, and we are often ignorant of the meaning and value of the life that surrounds us. At times we forget our purpose. Our actions can produce suffering, and we deny this inconvenient truth. We ask for forgiveness and for the ability to forgive ourselves, so that we can move forward in life and grow into our purpose in this world.

#### **Prayer for Transformation**

Let us pray together:

***We trust in your presence, and we have listened to your words. We wait for the revelation of Christ within us, and we wait for the peace that comes from living according to your promises. 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. May we worship in spirit and truth. Amen.***

#### **The Prayer of Return**

Jesus called to us, "Come unto me all who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Remember these words and remember that 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:** Psalm 23  
**Ministry of Music:** Celebrate God's Love Chancel Choir  
**+The Gospel Reading:** John 10:1-10  
**Reflection:** Rev. Jeff Munnis  
**Hymn of Reflection:** Great Is Your Faithfulness NCH #423

**Prayers for the Church and for 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 to be a light to the world. 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:** They'll Know We Are Christians Celeb #429  
by Our Love

**+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.

## **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](mailto: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.

### **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!

### **Continuing Prayers**

Lois & Jim Benson  
Linda Ballard  
Family of Jermaine Stubblefield  
Family of Ella Scannello  
Family of Herb Dement  
Family of Kathy Collins  
Mary Weaver  
Family of Audrey Sears Knofski  
Luanne Schaeffer  
Family of Dr. Mary ‘Tessie’ Behrens  
Kathy Crout  
Family of Sharon Hamilton

### **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

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### ***Prayers for the people of Cuba during power blackout***

### Upcoming Meetings & Events

Westside Shelter Serving	Mon, Apr 27 <sup>th</sup>	Lunch & Dinner	
Mad Hatter Tea Party	Sun, May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	12:00 pm	Hall
Transition Team Mtg	Tues, May 12 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 pm	Mtg Room
Ministries Council Mtg	Tues, May 19 <sup>th</sup>	6:30 pm	Zoom
Board of Trustees Mtg	Tues, May 19 <sup>th</sup>	7:00 pm	Zoom

### 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.stjohnsucemd.com](http://www.stjohnsucemd.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](mailto:barbara@stjohnsgraceucc.org).



### CEA: May continues with Mac 'n Cheese!

All kinds of Mac n' Cheese are needed!

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!*

#### Always available ways to help CEA:

**Include** a donation marked 'CEA' in the offering plate.

**Go** to the 'Donations' page on our website and use the CEA button to donate via credit/debit card.

**Gift cards** are accepted to enable CEA to purchase needed foods.



Please stop by our new website: [www.catonvillehelp.org](http://www.catonvillehelp.org) for lots of information about CEA and your community!



### Westside Men's Shelter Mission – Now Serving

We will again be serving lunch and dinner to the men at Westside Shelter on **Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**!

We will also be needing donated cakes to be shared with the men. 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, April 26<sup>th</sup>. The signup sheet is on the bulletin board in the Narthex.



### Westside Men's Shelter Donation Needs

**There is an ongoing need for shower shoes (flip flops) and these can be given and collected at any time into the bin in the Mission Hallway.**



### Mission & Outreach Transitional Hold-Alls

The National Capital Treatment and Recovery Center (a nonprofit organization based in Arlington & Alexandria, VA) provides substance abuse and mental health treatment to those who need these services. One of their programs is an 84-bed residential treatment center for men who are in need. When admitted, these men usually have their belongings in paper bags.

***You can help them feel prouder when they leave with the donation of gently used or new backpack, duffle bag, or piece of luggage.***

Please forward donations for Ken or Charlene Mowery.



# TIME for SPRING

## CLEAN OUT

### **Used Clothing Drop-Off Shed**

Sponsored By:  
St John's Grace United Church of Christ  
With the help of Turnkey Enterprises, LLC

#### Location:

**1000 S. Rolling Road, Catonsville, MD 21228**  
**(Parking Lot)**

#### Items Accepted:

All clothing, shoes, sneakers, belts, purses, blankets, sheets, pillowcases, drapes, and stuffed toys.  
(Your donation **will not** be cut up or shredded)

(Please – **no** rags, fabric scrapes, toys, or household goods,  
**please understand that the above-mentioned items are a hardship and expense to dispose of.**)

#### Turnkey Enterprises, LLC:

Turnkey Enterprises LLC is a for-profit company that partners with non-profit organizations in communities to help support their fundraising needs by recycling unwanted clothing. The clothing collected is used as clothing, not cut into rags. Turnkey services each location and pays the sponsoring organization by the pound for the unused items.  
[www.turnkey-enterprises.com](http://www.turnkey-enterprises.com)

\*\*\*Help us keep your donation clean and dry\*\*\*

Please put your donation in plastic bags. Thank you.

There are receipt forms in a slot in the mailbox in the hallway outside the office