



Fourth Sunday in Lent

Holy Eucharist IIA

19 March 2023

**The Episcopal Church of the
Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio**

Seeking to know and serve Christ
in loving service to the campus, the
community, and the world.

Today's printed [Order of Worship](#)

Lessons

Lessons for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

Old Testament – I Samuel 16: 1-13

Psalm – 23 (Sung)

New Testament – Ephesians 5: 8-14

Gospel – John 9: 1-41



<https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The Collect

GRACIOUS FATHER, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Gospel



John 9:1-41

AS JESUS WALKED ALONG, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

Gospel Commitment Questions:

What part of this story resonates with you?

What part did you find the most difficult to read?

The Sermon

Playing in Dirt

Do you have an opinion about dirt? I remember a day quite a few years ago one spring when my husband expressed his negative opinion of muddy dirt when our dog and I unintentionally tracked it onto the carpet in our apartment after a walk. Some children might have a different opinion, such as our niece who enjoys walking in mud listening to the fun squishy sound it makes.

Gardeners tend to enjoy digging in the dirt; some enjoy the smell of it or the feel of it in their hands. I've even heard a gardener or two tell me they find digging or turning over dirt rejuvenating.

Whatever our opinions about dirt, it is the stuff of life. As you might have noticed in today's Gospel, gardeners and children are not the only ones who enjoy playing in dirt, so does Jesus, which means so does God.

There is a lot going on in today's Gospel. It is a long story involving many characters, lots of emotions, and a miracle, so it might be easy to overlook the part about dirt. But, like so many little details in John's Gospel, it is not insignificant.

We just heard that one day when Jesus and his disciples were out and about they saw a man who somehow they knew had been born blind. The question the disciples asked Jesus reveals a painful truth about how many people perceive the disabled: they noticed the disability, not the person, and defined the person by the disability. Even worse, they associated the disability, in this case blindness, with sin. Who sinned, they wanted to know, so they could put blame on what they incorrectly believed was a punishment.

In our modern time that same mistake is often made. How many of us have experienced or witnessed someone ask similar questions when there has been a diagnosis that could lead to disability? You know the kind of question, the kind that asks what the person diagnosed has done wrong to bring disease or disability on themselves. Such questions reveal it is really hard to shake the perception that someone must have done something wrong and therefore deserves degenerative diseases or be disabled. But placing the blame only alienates people from each other, and doesn't help with healing, wellness or community. The truth is sometimes, these things happen. Sometimes a person is born blind. Sometimes a person develops a disease over time. Sometimes even the most successful medical professionals don't know why a person has a disease or a disability. And that not knowing can be disturbing. We tend to prefer certainty and knowledge to mystery and the unknown. So, in place of the unknown, we make up a reason to help give the illusion of certainty, which is quite possibly how the notion of disease, or disability as a punishment for sin and poor behavior came from. The problem with this is that instead of respecting the dignity of a person, this mindset often causes them to be identified by their disability or disease. That is the real sin, the sin of dehumanizing a person.

In response to the disciples' question, Jesus explained no one sinned. The man was born for the same reason all people are born: to give God glory by loving God and each other. To illustrate this, Jesus did something that takes us back to the beginning, the very beginning, when God made the world and everything in the world. In the second chapter of Genesis there is another creation story where God had a very hands-on method of creating humankind. God got so close to the earth, God not only walked it, God bent down and played in the dirt, like a gardener, or a child making mudpies. From

that dirt God made a human and breathed God's own breath into the human, giving life to all humanity.

The word used for dirt or more often translated dust in the creation story, is the word *adamah*. It means red earth and is where the name Adam comes from. It is the same word used in today's Gospel when Jesus bent down and made mud in the dirt with his saliva. Jesus was being like God, playing in the dirt, the stuff of life.

This means what Jesus did wasn't just a miracle that gave a person the physical ability to see. It is about how God respects the man, and through the disability, Jesus revealed God is at work in the world. This is the new creation Jesus is bringing into the world, and this new creation does not mistake disability for sin. Through this miracle, the true sin was illuminated, the sin of superiority, of believing yourself better than others. Superiority is the sin that creates divisions, that demeans and dehumanizes people, it shows no respect and gives no dignity.

It is never comfortable when sins are revealed, especially when those sins give some sense of explanation or certainty. That might be why the pharisees were so upset and could not share in the joy and delight when a man who used to be blind was able to see. They were quick to squelch any joy or delight, like a certain man I know who expressed displeasure when his wife and dog got a little dirt on the floor after a fun walk. Not because they weren't happy that the man could see, but because if he could see, that implied their system of assigning sin to disability was wrong and what they had believed all their lives was wrong. And it doesn't feel good to be wrong. It implied they were guilty of the sin they were supposed to be against. In addition, it also implied they could change, which can be difficult to do.

That is why the end of today's Gospel Jesus talked about seeing, not in the physical sense, but the ability to recognize God present and at work. Sometimes that work will expose the sins of individuals, institutions, communities, and societies. Other times that work is what reminds us that all people, regardless of ability or disability, age, education level, socioeconomic status, gender, identity, race, color, are to be respected and treated with dignity. Sometimes that work can reveal the very thing mistaken for sin is for God, something that actually reveals God's presence in our lives and the world.

Biblical scholars remind us, today's Gospel is one of the several signs in John's Gospel that reveal who Jesus is. It's good to remember that God's Son treats all people with dignity and respect, and so can all of us who follow Jesus. It is also a good reminder that God, like any gardener or child, loves to play in the dirt, the stuff of life. Those reminders can help us recognize the new creation God is still at work making in the world that we can all be part of.

A sermon by The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, 19 March 2023, at The Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, Ohio.

Sermon Commitment Questions:

How do you respond to mystery or the unknown?
Have you ever invented information to "fill in the gaps"?
If so, how did it work out?

Please include in your prayers

IN OUR WORLD, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for all families and law enforcement affected by gun violence. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray for the people who are suffering from war, especially the people of Ukraine, and we pray for all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

IN OUR DIOCESE, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

IN OUR PARISH, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community.

THOSE WHOM OUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED: Al S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Connie D., Jean R., Lia, Miriam, Sharon, R.C., Douglas and Gwynne Campbell, Ann Carswell, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Richard DeNune, Norm Fox, Lindsey and Regina Golden, Debbie Hunsberger, Bob and Nancy Jackson, John Jefferson, Peter Kachenko and family, Christine McGinn, Jeff Maiden, Julie Nehls, Rev. Ed Payne, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Virginia Richards, Flo and Jack Roach, Katyana Sayrs, Annette Secoy, Dale Showman, Michael Vaughn, and we pray for all who care for them. **

ANNIVERSARIES: Bruce and Sirlei Martin (3/23), Ben and Caitlin Schave (3/25)

BIRTHDAYS: Brogan Shannon (3/19), Naomi Clever (3/20), Philip Ortman

** Full names are normally not published online. However for the Sunday 10:30 service we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or grahammowery@aol.com.

At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched anytime later.

<https://cincinnati.cathedral.com/ccj/ccc/join-online/>

Washington D C -- there's much to explore at the the National Cathedral's online portal. <https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Wednesday, March 22, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion and Mercy (Nehls)

Sunday, March 26, 9:15 a.m. - - Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 26, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Sunday, March 26, 3:00 p.m. - - AGO concert 1st Presbyterian Church

Sunday, March 27, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. -- Julie's 102 Reception (Nehls Hall)

Tuesday, March 28, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting (Nehls Hall)

Wednesday, March 29, 12:30 p.m. -- Compassion/Well-Being (Nehls)

Coffee Hour Schedule

**Taken Dates for Altar
Flowers**

During Lent there are no flowers

[To Altar Flower Procedure](#)

Notes & Announcements (additional items in the Friday Bulletin)

Easter Flowers



If you would like to contribute to the fund for altar flowers on Easter as a memorial or thanksgiving, those contributions as well as names should be given or sent to Barbara Martin no later than Wednesday, March 29.

Church Meeting Sunday, March 19

Thank you to everyone who attended the informational parish meeting either via zoom or in person on the invitation to share our priest with another Episcopal parish. You can expect a summary in the Friday email.

Lenten Lunch Discussion Series on Compassion

You can still join us Wednesdays at 12:30 pm in Nehls Hall. We begin with the brief service of Noonday Prayer followed by discussion from the Lenten Devotional *Practicing Compassion with Your Whole Heart, Mind, Soul and Strength*. Bring your own lunch.

Next week we will discuss Compassion and **Listening**.

[To more about the Lenten Series.](#)

Memorial for Rev. Jan Griesinger - April 2

Community Memorial: Join in the celebration of the incredible life and legacy of Reverend Jan Griesinger on Sunday, April 2, 2023, from 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. Come ready to sing and share memories of this incomparable advocate for social justice. Location: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens (184 Longview Heights, Athens, OH). Reception to follow at Purple Chopstix.

R.S.V.P. requested to assist with reception planning, but not required. Email: Jan.G.Memorial@gmail.com

Community Memorial
Celebrating the incredible life and legacy of
Reverend Jan Griesinger



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3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens
184 Longview Heights, Athens, OH

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Email:
Jan.G.Memorial@gmail.com

1942 - 2022

ABOUT JAN: The Rev. Jan Griesinger, 80, longtime community activist and Director of United Campus Ministry in Athens, Ohio, died December 9, 2022. She attended DePauw University, graduating in 1964, and in 1970 received a Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. She was ordained that year by the United Church of Christ. In 1976 she joined Athens United Campus Ministry, where she worked until her retirement in 2004. Jan was involved with many local, national, and international LGBTQ+

and other social change organizations. In 1979, she and her life partner, Mary Morgan, co-founded a women's intentional community, the Susan B. Anthony Memorial UnRest Home and Women's Land Trust (SuBAMUH). A community memorial will be held on April 2, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens. Donations can be made in her honor to United Campus Ministry Center, Mt. Zion Baptist Church Preservation Society, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, SuBAMUH, and Calliope Feminist Choir. (Mickey J. Hart, Director, UCM)

For Bishop Transition News and Updates

[-- Follow this link --](#)

If you want to help the folks who have been negatively impacted by climate disaster and war anywhere in the world (including Ukraine) please consider contributing to

Yum Yum



Contacts, Information

Quick Links

[Parish website](#)

[Sermons](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines for in-person worship](#)

[Parish calendar](#)

[Staff](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines
and Back Issues](#)

[Diocese Southern Ohio](#)

[Bishop Transition](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

[Episcopal News Service](#)

[Episcopal Journal & Café](#)

In light of local conditions we request all persons wear masks inside the church building **regardless** of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office hours the thrift shop and chapel are available for individuals. Masks are required.

CrossRoads Café is temporarily closed.

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Dana Carlson, Junior Warden, at 740-664-2022 or by e-mail at carlsondana@hotmail.com.

For emergencies, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at

[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

The above takes you to the Parish page where you can find instructions or donate on-line via PayPal, If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube](#)

937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877).

The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, 64 University Terrace, Athens OH 45701

740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org
www.chogs.org

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[Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:
Masks are required.

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday
740-593-6877
chogs@chogs.org

Blessings !

Church of the Good Shepherd | 64 University Terrace, Athens, OH 45701

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