

UNIVERSITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Fourth Week of Lent | March 14, 2021 | 10:30 a.m.
Pastor - Reverend Michelle Mejia



Order of Worship – Online Service

WE GATHER FOR PRAYER AND PRAISE

Gathering Music

I Surrender All

Weeden

Welcome Message

Pastor Michelle

Call to Worship

**Before we were born,
Before we took our first breath,
Before the week started,
Before the year started,
Before we said, "I love you,"
Before we said, "I'm sorry,"
Before we figured out who we really are,
Before we figured out who we want to be,
Before it all—
God loved us.
Unconditionally and freely,
Fully and honestly—
God loved us.
Again and again, this is where our story begins.
Let us worship God!**

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice,
Which is more than liberty.

If our love were but more simple,
We should rest upon God's word;
And our lives would be illumined
By the presence of our Lord.

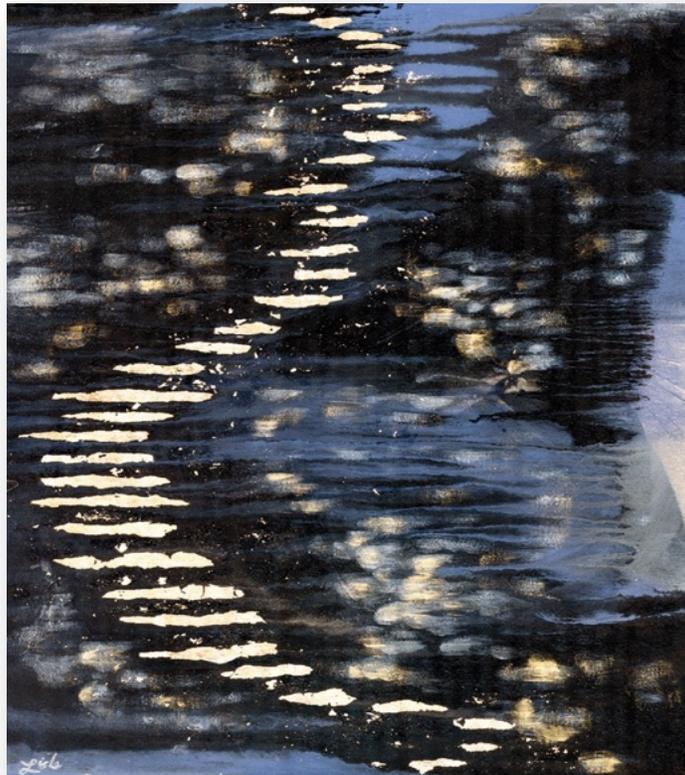
The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by 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 HEAR GOD'S WORD

Prayer for Illumination

We would make room for you, dear Lord: room in our minds and hearts;
room also in our life together. Let your word be born in us anew
so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, your splendor shines in us
and through us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

³ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

⁴ “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

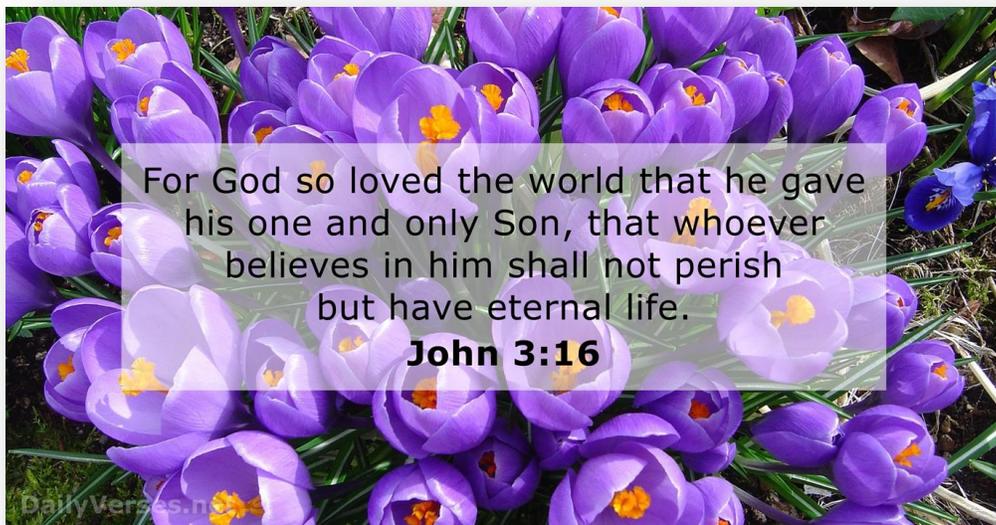
⁹ “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

This is the Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God.



For God so loved the world that he gave
his one and only Son, that whoever
believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Prayer of Confession

God of love,
We forget the beginning of the story—
That we were made from love, to be love, to give love.
Instead of rooting our narrative in the goodness refrain of creation,
We skip ahead and find our worth at the fall,
With Cain and Abel, lost in the wilderness.

We forget that first there was you, and you are love.
We forget that out of that love you created us.
We forget that from the very first day, you loved first.
We forget, because a love like that doesn't make sense to us. Forgive our low self-esteem.

Forgive our resistance to love ourselves.
Forgive our hesitation to trust that even we could be made good.
And forgive our tendency to pass that doubt on—from generation to generation.
Write a new beginning for us that roots our confidence in your unrelenting love.
With hope we pray, again and again. Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Beloved of God, no matter what we do, where we go, or what we tell ourselves—
God is love, and God is loving us.

Again and again, we are claimed, held, forgiven, and cared for.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—thanks be to God. Amen!

Invitation to Offering

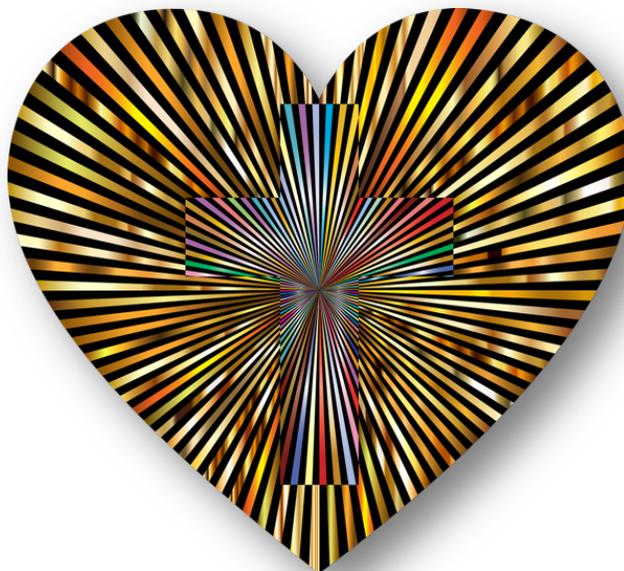
Giving of Our Gifts

**If you haven't already done so, we hope you'll share your gifts.*

Music Ministry

Womb of Life
Millicent Scarlett

Ruth Duck



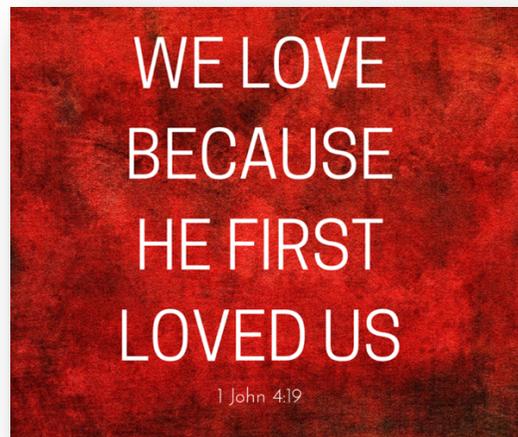
Affirmation of Faith **We believe God is love— Unconditional, constant love.**

**We believe this love exists for all, Choosing each and every one of us, Day after day,
Again and again and again.**

**We believe that God's love is like a river. Rivers cannot help but flow toward the sea;
God's love cannot help but move toward us. We are swimming in it.**

**We believe that God loved first.
We believe that God breathed life into dust.**

**We believe that God said, "This is good,"
And because we believe that God loved first,
We strive to build lives that reflect God's love.
May we begin again here. Amen.**



Hymn of Service

For God So Loved the World

Words by S. Fearing

For God so loved the World, God gave God's only son.
That through him life is found and our salvation won.
With gladsome voice give thanks to God for God is good. Let all rejoice!

All praise to God above for we are God's design
Christ won the fight; let's share the light. May justice shine!
With gladsome voice give thanks to God for God is good. Let all rejoice!

Opportunities for Connection and Service

Benediction

Postlude

Brethren, We Have Met to Worship

Moore

**To share your offering, you may use this link: <https://www.uumcp.org/electronic-giving>*

Another option is to mail your offering to the church office:

3621 Campus Drive | College Park, MD 20740

Liturgy: Adapted from *Liturgy* by Rev. Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. Flowers provided by David and Frances Notley. Flowers arranged by Marie Venero. Heart image: Gordon Johnson from pixabay.com For God So Loved the World. Words copyrighted 2019 : Steven M Fearing/stephenfearing.co

SIGN OF HOPE



We are inspired! UUMC hopes to partner with and support a local small business owner - to offer them our kitchen space. First, we have some work to do to! Ellen Brown is enthusiastically delving into this project. Are you able to help, too? We need:

- a small business restaurant owner in the area willing to talk with us about their needs and how a partner could be helpful
- contacts for people able to bring our kitchen up to code
- grant writers

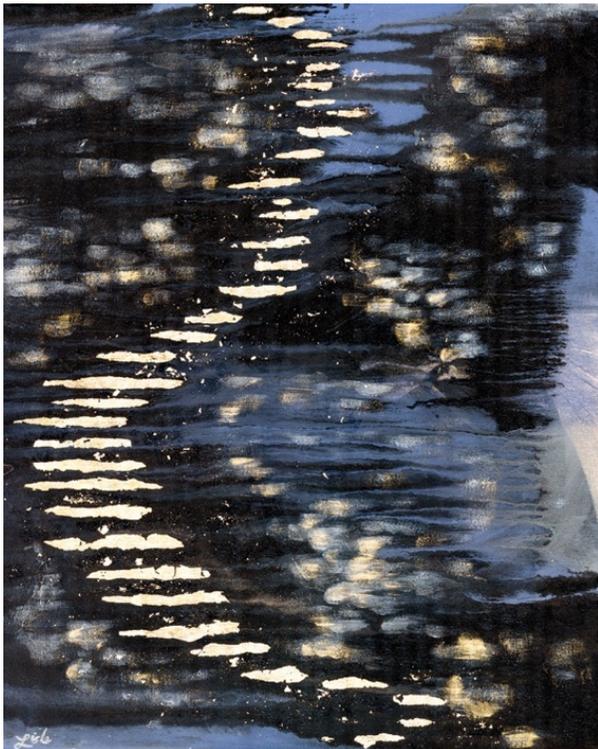
If you have skills or contacts to offer, please let the church office or Pastor Michelle know.

Artists' Statements

Light Wave

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 3:14-21 | *Acrylic painting with gold leaf on canvas*



My first memory of this passage is from writing “John 3:16” on my basketball shoes when I was in seventh grade, joining many of my teammates in blending our sport with our faith. I don’t remember knowing what the verse really meant, but my display of it was to make a statement about who I was—or at least who I desperately wanted to be. Like the branded clothes I wore, or the way I styled my hair, this was just another way to curate my middle school self-image. I wanted to show that I was good, that I fit in, that I believed in God. Later that basketball season, I added another Sharpie pen tattoo to my basketball shoes: my mother’s initials and the dates of her birth and death, marking the 44 years she lived. After her funeral, my teammates added her initials and the dates of her life to their sneakers in solidarity.

Now I know that Jesus originally spoke these famous words to Nicodemus, perhaps whispering them amidst the hushed noises of the night. I wonder why Nicodemus came to Jesus in the first place? Had Jesus’ teachings uprooted his religious self-image, one carefully curated to project

propriety and adherence to the law? Or had death recently left a sharp sting, unraveling his tidy beliefs, creating in him a well of desperate questions about eternal life?

Jesus speaks to him with poetry of promise: God didn’t send his son to judge the world, but so the world might be restored through him. For God so loved. For God so loves, that like light, God keeps traveling to reach us with that redeeming love. In this abstract painting, the gold leaf marks become like a wave gliding through the cosmos, moving endlessly until it reaches everything.

As I think back to those Sharpie pen inscriptions on my basketball shoes, perhaps “For God so loved... so that everyone... will have eternal life” was the perfect companion to my mom’s initials.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

again & again, god loves first

Prevenient

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Ephesians 2:1-10 | *Paper lace*



In our group study of the lectionary scriptures for Lent, Lisle was quick to tell me that this text matters a lot to Reformed theologians. I needed that theological and historical context. My first reading had brought nothing deep or important. I had completely missed what our Reformed thinkers had contemplated for centuries. Here are my notes from our conversation:

“This Ephesians text is really important to Reformed theologians. The idea in Paul’s words is all about God’s grace, not works. Prevenient grace—we are given grace and we live our lives in response to that grace. This makes me think of the Paul Simon lines,

*‘And as I watch the drops of rain
Weave their weary paths and die
I know that I am like the rain
There but for the grace of you go I.’
I imagine a flow of water; it speaks of baptism.
The ripple represents the expansive effect of
God’s prevenient grace.”¹*

Repetition in art is important. When I first created this piece, it appeared to me to be three

different images. The sky, the distant water, and the ripple in the foreground. As I stared at the three patterns, I desired unification. Perhaps I’d repeat the ripple in the sky, or maybe add thin lines in the foreground to tie it in. But maybe, metaphorically, this separation can represent the idea of prevenient grace. The sky and the distance appear separated from the present. God’s grace—represented in the water ripple in the foreground—will eventually connect us to it all.

—Hannah Garrity



Announcements for March 14, 2021

HOLY WEEK/EASTER SCHEDULE

- Palm Sunday – Prerecorded service; Facebook 10:30 a.m.
- Maundy Thursday – Zoom meal and service
- Good Friday – Prerecorded service
- Easter Sunday – Prerecorded service. Also, in-person worship on church lawn at 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday after Easter – Prerecorded cantata presented by our Aldersgate Choir

RE-LAUNCHING TASK FORCE Good news! Our Task Force has met and outlined plans for our in-person worship services. We will again be able to gather on our lawn, once a month, for worship and communion, beginning in April. In May, the committee will update the plans as the team considers our church family members' needs and health.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL Join our Sunday School class (via Zoom) for a discussion of scriptures and sermon, sharing of insights, and time of fellowship. We meet Sundays at 11:15 after our online pre-recorded worship services.

WEDNESDAY PRAYERS Join Pastor Michelle and members of your church family in a time of sharing prayers on Wednesdays at noon, via a Zoom call. You will receive log in information that morning.

CHURCH OFFICE This week, the church office will be open Wednesday – Friday.



Did You Know...

Titi's childcare job is ending. She has many different skills sets, so if you know of any job opening, let the church office know or email Titi.

Our organ is regularly used by two University of Maryland organ students.

University Church Nursery School has been able to safely be open since September. They have fewer children, classes and teachers this year to ensure safety. They will add another class this coming fall.

Our church lawn is a great place to safely meet for you and your friends or family members. There are five picnic tables for your use.

Spring officially begins next Saturday, March 20.

You may send tidbits of information to the church office to be included on this page in future bulletins.



University United Methodist Church

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[Facebook.com/uumcp](https://www.facebook.com/uumcp)

Twitter: @UUMCCollegePark

Instagram: [uumc_collegeparkUUMC](https://www.instagram.com/uumc_collegeparkUUMC)

Prayer Requests: prayers@uumcp.org

Michelle Mejia, Pastor: revmichelle@uumcp.org