



let's
open
our
eyes

NATIVE AMERICAN
MINISTRIES SUNDAY
APRIL 18, 2021

Welcome: “Open Our Eyes, Lord” (FWS #2086)

Hymn: “Crown Him with Many Crowns,” vv. 1,4 (UMH #327)

Reading the Word: Luke 24:36b-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Ministry of Music

Message: “Open Our Eyes, Lord”

Easter Sunday was two weeks ago. It was a joyous celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, when we were reminded that the tomb was empty – Jesus is alive. But the story doesn’t end there. In fact, it is really a new beginning.

During the days following Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' followers must have been filled with uncertainty as they processed what had taken place. Some may have wondered if it was all just a nightmare, and others may have remembered all that Jesus had done, taught, and trained them to do. In today's scripture passage, we find Jesus' followers huddling together, still confused, still in shock, and many questioning their faith, especially those who hadn't seen the resurrected Christ.

I don't know about you, but when I'm anxious or stressed, I often clench my jaw and find my hands curled into fists. My mind shuts out voices of reason, and I become defensive and over-react to others who might try to tell me I should feel differently. We can guess that the disciples were dealing with similar reactions, struggling to keep their faith with clenched hands.

And then - and then - Jesus appeared in the room and said, "Peace be with you." In the midst of their anxiety, fear, and loneliness, Jesus' presence brought peace. He opened his arms and hands to show them the healed scars from his crucifixion; he assured them that he was truly alive. After sharing a meal with them, he then shared the scriptures with them and - once again - once again, he taught them, opening their minds, opening their hearts, opening their eyes, opening their clenched hands so they were no longer held down by fear, anger, and feeling lost.

But he doesn't stop there. Jesus tells them that they are going to carry on his work, the work of sharing the good news of God's call to repentance, receiving the gift of forgiveness of sins, and sharing God's love. This is now the work for his followers to do, not just with each other or for those who act and think like them, but to the whole world, everyone. He has trained them during their time together, and he tells them to open their eyes, open their hands, open their hearts, not only to receive the grace of God, but to share it.

Think about it. We cannot receive or offer anything to someone else with closed hands, with closed minds, with closed eyes, ears, and hearts. They now have the tools to become the Church, and today, we, too have those same tools. We are the ones who are called to open our hand, minds, eyes, and hearts with family, friends, and neighbors with our congregation, as part of the United Methodist Church, and as members of the family of God in the world. We are the church.

Prejudices have no place in the family of God. We reach out to those who are our brothers and sisters nearby and far away, no matter what their ethnicity is. Today, we celebrate Native American Ministries, when, as our Discipleship Ministries says: “we have an opportunity to strengthen the church. Our gifts extend open hands, sharing peace, justice, and hope into Native American communities.”

But what can we actually do? We might be surprised. I share this video with you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zR8Qt9wgR-I>

It's only one of many ministries that reach out to those who struggle to make a living. There are food pantry ministries, help with scholarships for Native Americans who feel called to the pastorate, support for schools, help with revival of the native languages, and so much more. We can open our eyes, minds, hearts, and hands to connect with others. We are the Body of Christ together, regardless of race or ethnicity.

One of my favorite stories is about a college student who spent a year with a group of Navajos on their reservation as part of a research project he was doing for a doctoral thesis.

He lived with one family, sleeping in their hut, eating their food, working with them, and generally living the life of the Navajo Native American.

The old grandmother of the family spoke no English at all, yet a very close friendship formed between the two. They shared the common language of love and understood each other. Over the months, he learned a few phrases of Navajo, and she picked up a little of the English language. When it was time for him to return to the campus, the tribe held a going away celebration.

As he stood ready to get into his pick-up truck, the old grandmother came to tell him good-bye. With tears streaming from her eyes, she placed her hands on either side of his face, looked directly into his eyes and said, “I like me best when I’m with you.” Isn’t that the way we feel in the presence of Jesus? He brings out the best in us. We learn to see ourselves as worthy and valuable when we are in his presence. And we learn about love and acceptance when we work together as the Body of Christ. “I like me best when I’m with you,” can be a wonderful thing that the family of God can share with all who come to worship with them as well as take that sense of love and caring into the world to share with others. (Illustrations Unlimited, p. 228, #11, edited and adapted)

We are an Easter people who follow the resurrected Christ and who are called to bring the ministry of love and caring to others. “Easter is a time to feel the peace of Christ. Jesus has given us the power of open hands. We are called to touch lives, change lives and bring life to people who are feeling broken. Jesus appeared in an upper room among his followers. He opened their minds.

And in doing so, he gave them hope. He gave them peace. Today on Native American Ministries Sunday we are opening our minds and opening our hands, extending hope and peace through The United Methodist Church. The Lord has risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.” (from the Discipleship Ministries web page for today’s special Sunday resources.)

Prayer:

We miss seeing you, Jesus. Sometimes, you are right there with us, and we don’t see you. Maybe we can’t believe that it really is you, or, truthfully, we might also ignore your presence because it’s too awesome to believe. Yet, over and over again, you show us your wounds and invite us to touch you. You speak to us through the thousands of people who long to know your love through us, in the ways we care about and for them - in the ways we walk with them. Open our eyes, Lord. Open our ears, Lord. Open our hands, Lord. Open our hearts, Lord. Amen.

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.

Hymn: “Be Thou My Vision” (UMH #451)

Sending Forth



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann
Joan Allen
Jenn
Naomi
Erin Frane
Madeline
Charles Gilman
Barbara Clement

Harry Junkins
Marilyn & Gil
Michael Harrist
Sophia
Barbara Glidden
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook

The Family of Jen Patria
Christine & her parents
Jen - Stebbins daughter-in-law
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Our Church family
Those who have lost loved ones to COVID

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY



TOGETHER

OUR REACH IS BEYOND MEASURE

The United Methodist Church's special giving structure ensures your generosity blesses as many people as possible in sustainable, strategic ways

**YOUR DONATION CHANGES
THE WORLD ONE LIFE AT A TIME**

GIVE TO YOUR CHURCH:

Make checks payable to your local church or donate online via credit/debit card at ResourceUMC.org/SSGive



TO GIVE ONLINE SCAN
QR CODE WITH YOUR
SMARTPHONE CAMERA



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®





WHO WE ARE

FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



One way to make a donation to FUMC is to point your phone camera on QR code and it will guide you through the process... thanks for making a difference.



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038
Email - office@fumcportsmouth.net
Website - fumcportsmouth.com

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson
Like and Follow Us On:   