

Asbury United Methodist Church

143 Ann Mary Brown Drive, Warwick, RI 02888

401-467-5122 asburyumcri@gmail.com

Worship Leader: Joan White

Chancel: Jill Rowe

*Please rise in body or spirit

“Meaning”

Lent Two

Prelude “Jesus Paid It All” Hanna Noh

Welcome and Announcements

Over the Threshold

Leader: Mystic, author, and Benedictine monk Brother David Steindl-Rast said this: It is through wholehearted living that meaning flows into our lives... You see the sandpiper and something in you says a wholehearted yes, or you hear the rain and your whole being says yes to it. It s a special kind of yes; it s an unconditional yes.”

UMH 454 “Open My Eyes That I May See”

[sung slowly]

**Open my eyes that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!**

We continue our journey through Lent taking on a special lens, that of a deep and profound sense of awe. This is a spiritual journey in the tradition of ancient biblical poets, of mystics from yesteryear or today. In our scientific day, researchers are confirming what these poets and mystics knew all along—awe is essential for a life of wellbeing. In a time when we are flooded with a culture of competing soundbites, we are slowing down and spending time on a journey that leads to a precious stream of the deeper meanings of ordinary life.

**Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart,
I want to see you
I want to see you**

The good news is that we humans are “meaning-mongers.” Our brains are wired to interpret the ordinary stuff of life in metaphorical ways so that we can make some sense of it all. We long for meaningful lives in which we are more sure about the direction of our lives and about what we are to bring to this world. We yearn for experiences that leave us feeling more fulfilled. When we are “on the lookout” for meaning in our lives, we live at a deeper level, and mere existence turns into purpose. Let us rise in body and/or spirit and pray:

Awe-inspiring God,
we come together this day because we need to be reminded
to see through the lens of deeper meaning.
Too often, we write off the ordinary days of our lives as a drone of time passing through
the mass of media messages about what life is supposed to be about.
Open us to perceive anew.
Inspire us to receive our surroundings with awe.
Forgive us when we are distracted by the droll of the scroll
rather than lifting our senses to that which is right in front of us.
Be with us on this journey
as we seek again to marvel at your works.

sung slowly
**Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me,
Spirit divine!**

Know that your life is inherently meaningful
because of the One who gave you life.
God forgives us. Jesus embraces us. The Spirit enlivens us.
We are whole.
With awe, we accept this belovedness.
And all God’s people say, “**Amen.**”

The Peace
The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

I invite you to share the peace of Christ with those around you, remembering to greet
those online with a wave to the camera.

Opening Hymn UMH 451 - “Be Thou My Vision” vs. 1,3

Contemporary Reading

Reader: Our first reading is a contemporary one—an excerpt from Brian McLaren in his book *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*:

“...the neocortex of the brain...makes language possible and gives meaning to the word ‘meaning.’ It enables me to talk to myself and observe myself. It integrates current awareness with memory of past experiences and with the ability to imagine future scenarios. It organizes my experience in stories with beginnings, middles, and ends. It helps me think critically, creatively, and independently. Without the meaning committee [in my brain], there would be no Bach or the Beatles, no Galileo or Einstein, nor Moses or Mary or Jesus or the Buddha or Mohammed. It is the most recently evolved part of me, and frankly, it still has a lot of bugs and glitches that haven’t been worked out yet.”

Ancient Reading

Excerpt from Psalm 19

Reader: The ancient poet who wrote Psalm 19 opened themselves to the wisdom and understanding of the meaning of life through awe at the handiwork of God. Creation itself declares understanding, without needing words to tell it. Sometimes meaning can be found simply through a feeling. Hear this poet now:

*The heavens herald your glory, O God,
and the skies display your handiwork.
Day after day they tell their story,
and night after night they reveal
the depth of their understanding.
Without speech, without words,
without even an audible voice,
their cry echoes through all the world,
and their message reaches the ends of the earth...
Holding you in awe, YHWH, is purifying; it endures.
Your decrees are steadfast, and all of them just.
They are more precious than gold,
than the purest of gold,
and sweeter than honey,
than honey fresh from the comb.
In them your faithful people find instruction;
there is great reward in keeping them.*

In Awe of Music (Choir) “Here I Am, Lord”

In Awe of the Word
“Meaning” Rev. Yohan Go

Approaching an Awesome God

During this Lenten season, we will take a brief moment each week to practice *Visio Divina* before sharing our joys and concerns. I invite you to embrace this practice as a way to recognize God's presence in every moment of our lives. As we reflect on God's nearness in our own journeys, let us also listen with care and sincerity to the joys and concerns of others, mindful that God is present in their stories as well.

Visio Divina

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Holy and Living God, we approach this time of prayer, yearning for meaning for our lives. With all our senses, we open to you.

Give us lenses of awe with which to perceive and love others as you perceive and love us. We imagine in our mind's eye now the people in our lives, the people of our communities, and the people of our world. Each of them is beloved by you, and this alone creates awe in us. We especially lift up those who need our prayers in this moment... *[continue with prayers of thanksgiving and care for people]*.

For all these people and those we name in our hearts,
Hear our prayer, Awesome God.

Give us lenses of awe with which to perceive and love your creation as you perceive and love it. Each butterfly, each shell, each sunset reminds us that symbols of the meaning of life are everywhere. You are making all things new all around us. Help us to care for the nature around us. This week, we name... *[continue with prayers about specific entities of nature in your area]*.

For all these places, creatures, and lifeforms, and those we name in our hearts,
Hear our prayer, Awesome God.

Give us lenses of awe with which to perceive and love life as you perceive and love the life you have given us. Open us to a more meaningful existence. Help us to know that our existence itself already has meaning and we are not required to earn it or deserve it, simply open to it. Slow us down in this season of Lent so that we might savor anew the gift of life. We pause in this silence, setting intentions of awe for the week ahead.

[pause in silence]

For all these intentions,
Hear our prayer, Awesome God.

Let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

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, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sung Prayer Response

(Tune: "This is My Father's World")

**You are a great and awesome God,
your wonders we proclaim.
You are our Rock, our Strength, our Shield,
from age to age the same.
You forgive us all our sins,
you transform us with your love.
In joyful, grateful, hearts we sing
you are a great and awesome God.**

Responding with Awe

Offering/Offertory "Give Thanks"

Doxology

[Tune: Old 100th]

**Praise God, Creator of us all,
Praise Christ, by whom we hear our call,
Praise Spirit, that which sets us free,
Our awe is yours, the One-in-Three.**

Offering Prayer Rev. Yohan Go

Closing Hymn UMH 368 - "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" vs. 1,4

We Go Forth with Awe

Benedictions are blessings. And blessings are all around us. So for this season, instead of bowing your head as I offer a Benediction blessing, I invite you to open your palms in a position of receiving, and hold your head high, imagining a radiant stream of light from above shining upon you and everything else around you. And this week when you need to be reminded of that the world is rife with meaning, take this stance again. Open your palms to receive, look around to perceive, and notice one small thing that can light up your heart for a moment.

And now may you go forth
remembering Brother Steindl-Rast's words:

“It is through wholehearted living
that meaning flows into our lives.”

Be a purveyor of awe this week.
Live wholeheartedly and expectantly each day,
keeping watch for the deeper meaning surrounding you.
Say an unconditional “yes” to the simplest of moments
as you invite awe to live and breathe new life in you.

Be a “purveyor of awe,”
curating a life of spiritual depth
that inspires others to join you on the journey.

May the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of Awe,
the Holy One-in-Three,
be with you now and throughout these days,
Amen.

Postlude “God Be with You Till We Meet Again” Hanna Noh

Announcements

1. The worship leader for Sunday, March 23rd is Alice Pace.
2. May Tea Party Planning meeting will be today. Please see Andrea.
3. Please take a Lenten spiritual practice booklet along with a sand timer. Follow the instructions for Visio Divina and engage in this practice throughout the Lenten season.
4. **Join Us in Building the Cross!** In the **Coffee Room**, you’ll find a special cross—a space to lay down your burdens and receive Christ’s grace. Each week, take a moment to **reflect, repent, and release**. Write your silent prayer in your heart, take a wooden slice, and **place it on the cross** as a sign of surrender and trust. Together, we are building more than a cross—we are building a community of grace. Join us in this sacred journey.

Birthdays

17th Colleen Cone

18th Tyler Perry

22nd LaDonna Pratt

World Down Syndrome Day is 3/21

Down Syndrome occurs when there are 3 instead of 2 copies of the 21st chromosome in each cell body. 3/21 aims to promote awareness and understanding of Down syndrome and to recognize the dignity, rights, potential and wellbeing of people with Down syndrome.

Flowers

The flowers on the altar this week are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Dorothy MacDonald by her daughter Marilyn Blanche and family.