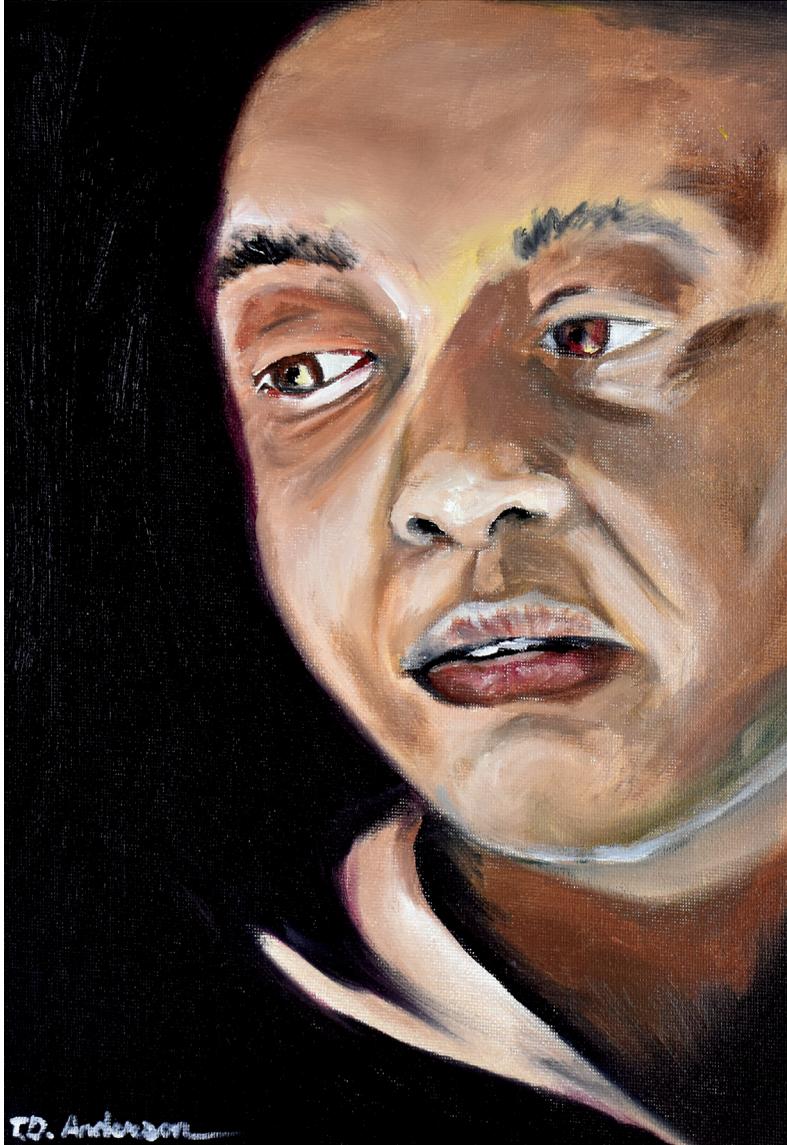


Community Presbyterian Church
open hearted, open minded



February 22, 2023
Ash Wednesday

Welcome to worship this evening!

Bulletin Cues: **Bold** indicates congregational response, * indicates please stand, if able.

artist statement on the cover art

Title: don't look up

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Isaiah 58:1-12, Oil on canvas



I love portraiture because I believe there is something deeply profound about our faces and what they can communicate. Few things are more beautiful to me than the shapes and shadows created in our faces by directional light. The pieces I have offered for this Lenten series attempt to show the drama that light and darkness create together on the human visage. Because I'm a person of color, I am careful to acknowledge how scripture's preference for light over darkness has historically been used against darker-skinned peoples. Therefore, I do not subscribe to a light/dark dichotomy that suggests one is preferable to the other. I believe light and dark work together to frame a specific part of the picture that needs our attention the most. In each of my pieces, light is coming from a specific direction and cooperates (not competes) with darkness to spotlight something. The Isaiah text prophesies to a community preoccupied with religious observance that draws the gaze "upward" to God, but neglects the people and matters that are most important to God. God is not calling for fasts and religious rituals that only focus heavenward. As the community has focused on things above, they persist in injustice below. The people have exalted themselves above their kindred and wondered why God has not responded to them. Meanwhile, God is shining light on what they've neglected below—that is to say, their own community. The person depicted here is fixing their gaze upon a light source that is just below and to the side of them. This is an invitation to stop elevating one's worship and oneself above one's siblings and peers, for it is there that God may be found. —Rev. Denise Anderson

Church Staff

Pastor	Rev. Jan Wiersma
Choir Director	Meg Cain
Handbell Director	Judy Kereakos
Pianist	Glenna Muir
Custodian	Nancy Sanford
Office Manager	Stephanie Pasch

Serving in Worship Tonight

Liturgist	
Special Music	CPC Choir
IT Support	Louis Bouchard

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together at the edge of a new season.

We stand together on the cusp of something new.

Will we wade into self-reflection?

Will we welcome honesty to the table?

Will we listen for God's invitation?

Will we seek deeper faith?

What kind of fast do we choose? What kind of faith will we build?

We gather together at the edge of a new season.

Listen, God is speaking.

OPENING HYMN GTG 203

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

vs. 1-3

Refrain

Je - su, Je - su, fill us with your love; show

us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from you. *Fine*

1 Kneels at the feet of his friends, si - lent - ly wash - es their
 2 Neigh-bors are wealth-y and poor, var - ied in col - or and
 3 These are the ones we should serve; these are the ones we should

to Refrain
 feet, Mas - ter who acts as a slave to them.
 race; neigh-bors are near us and far a - way.
 love; all these are neigh-bors to us and you.

CALL TO CONFESSION

Our scripture tells the story of people trying hard to be faithful. They ask God, “God, do you notice? Do you see all the good we’re doing?” Like them, we want to hear God say, “Excellent job, good and faithful servant.” But in today’s scripture, God says to the people, “I want you to seek justice.” In the prayer of confession we linger in this tension for a moment. We acknowledge that we are not perfect and we ask for God’s help. God may challenge us but God will never abandon us.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God,

How many times in a day could we choose love?

How many times could we choose justice?

How many times could we speak kindly to ourselves?

How many times could we offer grace?

And how often do we miss our chance?

Forgive us for choosing the path you did not travel.

Forgive us for hitching our horse to the world’s measure of goodness.

Return our hearts to you and guide us, even in the parched places.

With gratitude we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith, when a baby is learning to walk, the parents do not criticize the baby for falling. Instead, they celebrate every wobbly step. They applaud every hesitant stand. Surely the same must be true of God. No matter how many times we fall, no matter how often we choose the wrong path, God is waiting for us at the end with open arms. We are forgiven. We are invited. We belong. Thanks be to God for a love like that. Amen.

LISTENING FOR GOD’S WORD

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

God, we want to hear your voice. Speak clearly. Don’t hold back. We are beginning a new season today, and we don’t want to begin without you. So speak to us today—through silence, through scripture, through song. Speak to us like a gentle breeze or a loud trumpet. We don’t care how, we just long to hear your voice. So don’t hold back. We are here. We are listening.
Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley
American Folk Hymn, arr. Tom Council

CPC Choir

SCRIPTURE READING

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways,

as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness

and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;

they ask of me righteous judgements, they delight to draw near to God.

‘Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?’

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,

and oppress all your workers.

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is this the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,

and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,

to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover them,

and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,

and your healing shall spring up quickly;

your vindicator shall go before you,

the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;

you shall cry for help, and your God will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,

the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,

then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually,

and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

MEDITATION

Pastor Jan

RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in a God who chooses freedom,
who unties every rope and carries our burdens.
We believe in a God who ushers in the poor and the hungry,
who has a seat saved for all of us.
We believe in a God whose love is like the sun,
who says, "I'm here, I'm here!" every time we cry.
We believe in a God who walks before us in the parched places,
who makes our bones strong, who tends to us like a gardener.
And because we believe, we strive to choose love.
Because we believe, we strive to pursue justice.
Because we believe...
Amen.**

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth. May these ashes remind us that beauty is born out of loss, and that goodness arises from failure, that our work has meaning when you use it for the life of the world.

All are invited to come forward to receive the imposition of ashes. If you cannot come forward but desire to receive, we will come to you.

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

PRAYER

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation, That we may show forth your glory in the world.

RESPONSIVE READING Psalm 51 adapted from Nan Merrill, *Psalms for Praying*

Have mercy on me, Gracious One, according to your love,
and in your abundant kindness, forgive me
where my thoughts and deeds have hurt others.

Lead me in paths of justice; guide me in paths of peace.

Teach me to know my own weaknesses and sins,
the unloving ways that hide your life in me,
for I keep company with fear, and dwell in ignorance.

Yet I was brought forth in love and love is my birthright.

You have placed your truth in my inmost being;
therefore, teach me the wisdom of the heart.
Cleanse me so that your light may shine through me,
and transform my weakness into strength.

Do not look on my past mistakes but on my true heart's desires.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Enfold me with your Holy Spirit, and
restore in me the joy of your saving grace.

**Give me the courage of a renewed spirit
and then I will teach others your ways.**

Deliver me from society's addictions,
and keep temptation far from me;
so I may tell of your justice and mercy.

Open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.

For you do not want sacrifice; you delight in friendship.
The best sacrifice is a humble spirit;
a repentant and contrite heart you will not despise.

Therefore receive our gratitude and love.

Let the nations turn from war
and encourage one another as good neighbors do.
Melt our hearts of stone,
and break through the fears that lead us into shadow.

Guide our steps in the way of peace.

JOYS AND CONCERNS and THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father and Mother in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and let us not be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen**

SENDING INTO THE WORLD TO LOVE AND SERVE

*CLOSING HYMN GTG 762

When the Poor Ones

all verses; solo verse 1



1 When the poor ones who have noth - ing share with strang - ers,
2 When at last all those who suf - fer find their com - fort,
3 When our joy fills up our cup to o - ver - flow - ing,
4 When our homes are filled with good - ness in a - bun - dance,



when the thirst - y wa - ter give un - to us all,
when they hope though e - ven hope seems hope - less - ness,
when our lips can speak no words oth - er than true,
when we learn how to make peace in - stead of war,



when the crip - pled in their weak - ness strength - en oth - ers,
when we love though hate at times seems all a - round us,
when we know that love for sim - ple things is bet - ter,
when each strang - er that we meet is called a neigh - bor,

Refrain / Estribillo



then we know that God still goes that road with us,



then we know that God still goes that road with us.