

**A Warm Welcome to
Solomon's United Church of Christ**

Sunday, March 15, 2026 9:00 am

Rev. Julia L. Brown, Pastor

Church Website: www.mysolomonsucc.org

WORDS OF WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE & SILENT MEDITATION

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Some days, it's hard to recognize the signs, when what we have come to know and rely on is ablaze and everything looks like ashes. Do you know what the Holy One can do with ashes?

Many: Then our Creator knelt down and formed humanity from the dust of the ground, and breathed new life.

One: Some days, it's difficult to believe the signs, when truths are erased and buried and there is nothing left to witness but the bare dirt. Do you know what the Holy One can do with dirt?

Many: Then our Redeemer spat in the dirt and made mud spreading it on the man's eyes and visions appeared of a new day rising.

One: Some days, it feels impossible to embrace the signs, so we come together to pay attention, and seek, and be changed, finding our grounding in the ashes that were once stars, in the dirt that holds galaxies, in the mud that birthed our bones and breath.

Many: Then God who made safe ground in the middle of the sea said: See, I am doing a new thing. Do you not perceive it? and a way was made out of no way toward hope. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

"My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

Black # 403

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION (unison)** (from Open Unto Me, a prayer by Howard Thurman)

Open unto us, hope for our despair. Open unto us, dreams for our dread. Open unto us, courage for our fear. Open unto us, vision for our skepticism. Open unto us, wisdom for our confusion. Open unto us, love for our hates. Open unto us, Your heart for our hearts. O God, our God, open unto us. Amen.

MOMENT of QUIET PRAYER and PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION

In our gospel reading for today, when Jesus and the disciples encounter a man who was blind, the disciples ask Jesus, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" And Jesus replied, this is not a story about sin.

Our Christian tradition, our churches, and our world are rife with stories where difference is mistaken for deficiency, inferiority, even sin, with dire consequences. These stories and histories of ableism, of racism, and so many other isms are testing us, challenging us to open toward new understanding and acknowledge with vulnerability where we have caused hurt and harm. So in this moment, let us open our hearts, minds and spirits to this call to turn around.

One: For the ways we have been shaped by a culture that wants to place blame and find fault when we encounter differing abilities and embodiments, as if they mean wrongness or offense,

Many: God, have mercy.

One: For the times when we have used language that draws a line between disability and sin, using blind or deaf or lame as if they mean ignorant, doubting, unfaithful,

Many: Christ, have mercy.

One: For the moments we have disbelieved and disregarded the needs, stories, and experiences of those who are disabled as if access was a problem, a burden and we know better,

Many: God, have mercy.

One: Open us to new stories of disability from those who know them best.

Many: Turn us around, Holy One. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

Let your soul receive this rest: There is no story we can't unlearn, and no way of loving we can't learn anew. Thanks be to God, who forgives us and frees us, always inviting us to change and become a new creation from the ground up.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Black #775

*And God will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God's hand.*

CHILDREN'S TIME

OLD TESTAMENT READING 1 Samuel 16:1-13

EPISTLE READING Ephesians 5:8-14

HYMN "Listen to Your Savior Call"

Black # 250

GOSPEL READING John 9:1-41

SERMON

PASTORAL PRAYER & OUR LORD'S PRAYER (unison)

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION

Maybe today, you're spent. Maybe it feels like you have nothing else to give. Maybe you are emptied out, bent over, barely making it. Maybe you feel like dirt, dust, ashes. Beloved, do you not know what the Holy can do with dust? Even from spit and mud, God creates new dreams and new visions. So let us discover what abundance emerges when whatever we have finds its way into the hands of grace.

***PRESENTATION & OFFERING RESPONSE**

Black # 785

*We give you but your own / Whate'er the gift may be
All that we have is yours alone / We give it gratefully*

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION (unison)**

Into a world desperate for signs of hope, let these gifts arrive as beacons. Into communities working for signs of freedom, let these gifts unlock shackles. Into hearts searching for signs of compassion, let these gifts offer tenderness. Into each breath yearning for signs of new life, let these gifts come as possibility. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN** "Let There Be Light, O God of Hosts"

Black # 589

BENEDICTION

One: The disciples asked, whose fault is it? This is not a story about sin, Jesus replies. It is a story about what is being revealed. Let this revelation be our blessing.

The neighbors asked if it's really him, if it's really possible? This is not a story about blindness, the healed one replies. It is a story about signs and dreams and what the light shines through. Let these signs be our blessing.

The leaders asked, he can't be the one, can he? This is not a story about the one we've been waiting for, the healed one replies. It is a story about how all of us are part of the new day rising. Let all of us be our blessing.

The teacher asked, do you believe? This is not a story about creeds, the healed one replies. It is a story about testifying to the love you witness. Let this testimony to love be our blessing and we be the witnesses, to the ends of the earth.

May the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit be with
you and go with you always. Our Worship Service is ended,

Many: May our service never end. Amen.

ORGAN CHIMES & POSTLUDE

**Please stand as you're comfortable*

Liturgies adapted from UCC Worship Ways. Originally written by Dr. Sharon R. Fennema.