

# The Celebration of the Gospel

February 21, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

## First Sunday in Lent

If you are a guest, we welcome you to worship and ask that you consider filling out a contact form at [www.stjohnsbr.org/guest](http://www.stjohnsbr.org/guest) so we can be in touch with you this week.



**ST. JOHN'S**

United Methodist Church

*Glorifying God. Feeding People. Making Disciples.*

*We are a Christian community called to share our gifts through worship, witness and service so that others will know God and become disciples of Jesus Christ.*

## Again We Gather

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Rev. Lane Cotton Winn

Songs of Praise

*As the Deer*

As the deer pants for the water,  
so my soul longs after you.  
You alone are my heart's desire,  
and I long to worship you.  
You alone are my strength, my shield  
to you alone may my spirit yield.  
You alone are my heart's desire,  
and I long to worship you.

*Praise to the Lord*

Praise to the Lord,  
all of you, God's servants.  
Blessed be the name  
of our God now and ever.  
From the rising of the sun  
may the Lord be praised.  
Praise to the name of the Lord!

There is none like our God  
in the heavens or on earth,  
who lifts the poor from the dust,  
seating them with the mighty,  
who stoops to raise the weak and low:  
may the Lord be praised.  
Praise to the name of the Lord!

Call to Worship

Rev. Deirdré Halliburton

God meets us in the night—  
Before the sun rises,  
Before the wound heals,  
Before there are answers,  
Before there is closure.

God meets us in the light—  
Where joy is effervescent,  
Where laughter is contagious,  
Where flowers bloom from cracks in the  
sidewalk,  
And where people gather around the table.

God meets us at the threshold—  
At the edge of the water,  
At the beginning of the wilderness,  
At the start of something new,  
On the edge of faith.

And if God meets us in all those places,  
then surely God meets us in between—  
**Staying with us through the wilderness.**

We are not alone. God is all around.  
**Let us worship the God of the here and now.**

## Again We Proclaim

Children's Moment

Pastor Deirdré

Prayer for Illumination

Pastor Lane

Holy God,  
if I am honest, faith often feels like  
water in my hands.  
No matter how hard I try to hold onto it,  
some of it always slips through—  
like droplets of truth running down my wrists,  
back toward my heart.  
This human inability to hold onto you  
leaves me thirsty for more.  
So as we prepare to read scripture, I pray  
that once again, you would meet us here.  
Meet us in our hope and our heartache.  
Meet us in our fear and our joy, meet us  
in our cupped hands and clenched fists.  
And even if the water keeps running, and  
we do not have a sky-parting moment of clarity,  
or a tangible sense that you are near;  
even if we do not hear the words, "This is my  
beloved," ringing in our ears,  
we will trust that you are near,  
always and forever meeting us here,  
running toward our hearts.  
Gratefully we pray, Amen.

Scripture

*Mark 1:9-15*

Pastor Lane

The Word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

"Again & Again, God Meets Us"

Pastor Lane

# Again We Respond

## Prayer of Confession

God who meets us where we are—  
there is nowhere we can go that you are not.  
**You were with Jesus at his baptism.**  
**You were with him in the wilderness,**  
**and even in between, you were there,**  
**saying aloud, “This is my beloved.”**

We know that you are with us too—in the good,  
the bad, and everything in between—  
but so often we act like we are alone.  
**Instead of coming to you with our hurt,**  
**we hold it in or cast it onto others.**  
**Instead of coming to you with our joy,**  
**we credit ourselves and offer you nothing.**

How can we long for a deeper relationship with you  
while living like you are nowhere to be found?  
**Forgive our self-centered ways.**  
**Remind us that in every breath,**  
**in every step, you are there.**

You are the God who meets us where we are.  
**Before and behind, above and below,**  
**within and around. Amen.**

## Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith, if you hear nothing else today,  
hear this:

God is here.  
God sees you.  
God knows you.  
God meets you at the edge  
of every new beginning,  
And God calls you beloved.

**We are washed by the water.**  
**We are called beloved.**  
**Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

## Sharing the Love and Peace of Christ

## Offering Our Tithes and Gifts to God

*We appreciate your generosity.*  
*Each gift enables us to be a blessing in our community.*

*You may give online here:*  
<http://www.stjohnsbr.org/give>

## Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;**  
**praise him, all creatures here below;**  
**praise him above, ye heavenly host;**  
**praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

## Sharing Holy Communion

*If you live in the Baton Rouge area and  
would like someone to bring Communion to your home,  
please contact us in the church office.*

Pastors

# Again We Are Sent Out

## Closing Prayer

Family of faith, please pray with me.

**O God,**  
**Again and again,**  
**You meet us where we are and invite us to take**  
**another step closer,**  
**another step deeper,**  
**another step further,**  
**in this journey of faith.**  
**Again and again,**  
**we are fed by your love, grace, and forgiveness.**  
**As we leave this space, may we share those same**  
**gifts with others.**  
**Show us the way that leads to wholeness.**  
**Gratefully we pray, Amen.**

Pastor Lane

## Call to Action

## Hymn of Discipleship

*O Jesus, I Have Promised*

**O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;**  
**be thou forever near me, my Master and my friend.**  
**I shall not fear the battle if thou art by my side,**  
**nor wander from the pathway if thou wilt be my guide.**  
**O let me feel thee near me! The world is ever near;**  
**I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;**  
**my foes are ever near me, around me and within;**  
**but Jesus, draw thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.**  
**O Jesus, thou hast promised to all who follow thee**  
**that where thou art in glory there shall thy servant be.**  
**And Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;**  
**O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.**

## Benediction

Pastor Lane

As you leave this space,  
may your mouth speak of God's goodness.  
May your arms hold those in need.  
May your feet walk toward justice.  
May your heart trust its worth.  
May your soul dance in God's grace.  
And may this be your rhythm—  
again and again and again,  
until God's promised day.  
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved,  
and Love itself, go with courage, go with heart,  
go in peace.  
Amen.

## Postlude

*Thank you for worshipping with us!*

*We thank all our worship stewards, musicians,  
tech team, ushers, and hosts for assisting in today's service.*

*Permission to stream music covered by  
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*Most of our liturgy and prayers were written  
by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art, LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

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