

The background is an abstract composition of soft, pixelated colors. It features a mix of pastel and vibrant hues including light blue, lavender, teal, and pink. A prominent rainbow-like gradient is visible at the bottom, transitioning from red to orange to yellow. The overall texture is soft and painterly, with some darker, more saturated areas interspersed among the lighter tones.

The Season of Sacred Story



PRAYING TOGETHER, SEASON OF SACRED STORY III

PRELUDE "Ach Gott Von Himmel" - Vetter

HYMN Guide Me O My Great Redeemer (NCH 18)

1 Guide me, O my great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty;
hold me with your powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,
where the healing waters flow.
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
ever be my strength and shield,
ever be my strength and shield.

3 When I reach the River Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on heaven's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever sing to you,
I will ever sing to you.

THE SEASON OF SACRED STORY GREETING

O God of every now and every then,
We pause to praise you for all the moments of our lives.

We praise you for the holy moments, remembered in story, that strengthen our faith.
We each have a story and our story has power.

We praise you for the aching moments, remembered in story, from which we learn.
We each have a story and our story has power.

We praise you for the extraordinary moments, remembered in story, that call us to
our better selves.
We each have a story and our story has power.

We praise you for every moment
and the beauty of stories that draw us closer to you.

THE COLLECT

God is with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

Creator our God, we bless your Name for the witness of Frederick Douglass, whose impassioned and reasonable speech moved the hearts of people to a deeper obedience to Christ: Strengthen us also to speak on behalf of those in captivity and tribulation, continuing in the way of Jesus Christ our Liberator; who with you and the Holy Spirit dwells in glory everlasting. **Amen**

PSALM 139: 1-11, 22-23

Lord, you have searched me out and known me; * you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You trace my journeys and my resting-places * and are acquainted with all my ways. Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, * but you, O Lord, know it altogether. You press upon me behind and before * and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; * it is so high that I cannot attain to it. Where can I go then from your Spirit? * where can I flee from your presence? If I climb up to heaven, you are there; * if I make the grave my bed, you are there also. If I take the wings of the morning * and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there your hand will lead me * and your right hand hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, * and the light around me turn to night," Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; * darkness and light to you are both alike. Search me out, O God, and know my heart; * try me and know my restless thoughts. Look well whether there be any wickedness in me * and lead me in the way that is everlasting.

THE SACRED STORY

A reading taken from the works of Jonathan Kozol.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

The people respond to each reading

Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in God, who creates all things, who embraces all things, who celebrates all things, who is present in every part of the fabric of creation.

We believe in God as the source of all life, who baptizes this planet with living water.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the suffering one, the poor one, the malnourished one, the climate refugee, who loves and cares for this world and who suffers with it. And we believe in Jesus Christ, the seed of life, who came to reconcile and renew this world and everything in it.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, The breath of God, who moves with God and

who moves among and with us today.

We believe in everlasting life in God. And we believe in the hope that one day God will put an end to death and all destructive forces. I believe in life eternal, in which no one will be foreigner but all will be citizens of the kingdom where God reigns forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of love, you are with us in every transition and change. We thank you for the gifts, talents and skills with which you have blessed us. We thank you for the experiences that have brought us to this moment. We thank you for the work of others that gives breadth and depth to our own work. Be with us as we move forward, rejoicing with you and supporting one another.

God of mercy, God of peace, hear our prayer.

Grant us the courage to hear your call to engage in the personal and communal work of dismantling racism through deep listening, reflection, and action as a call to justice for all God's people.

Suffering God, disturb us.

We pray for relief from the ongoing scourge of gun violence. We pray for those who have died and those who have been wounded. We pray for our legislators, that they would look beyond their self-interests.

Sophia God, compel us to change.

We pray for all children, parents, faculty and staff as they seek to create a safe learning environment. May their hearts, bodies and minds be nourished as they record their own stories within this living history.

Creator God, guide us.

We pray for all those pushed to the margins facing food shortages, housing uncertainties, or lack of access to health care or mental health care. We pray for all who live in fear.

Tender God, hold us.

We now offer the specific concerns of this parish family...

The leaders will leave a period of time for the people to name their concerns silently, aloud or in the chat.

Help us create new stories that reflect the full inclusion of every human being.

Loving God, show us how to fully honor the rainbow of all humankind.

We now offer the thanksgivings of this parish family...

The leaders will leave a period of time for the people to name their thanksgivings silently, aloud or in the chat.

O God, you have created the wondrous diversity of our lives: hear our prayers and help us to walk humbly with you.

May our story grow as one of justice, strength and dignity for all. Amen.

THE PEACE

Peace of Christ is always with you.

And also with you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERTORY

“God Will Make a Way” - arr. Mark Hayes

Krista Donough, soprano Chris Henke, piano

THE LORD’S PRAYER Pray in the language and version that brings you closest to the Creator.

CLOSING PRAYER

God revealed in the strangers approach and the bread of hospitality, in the message of new life and the laughter of response. Thank you for disordering our boundaries and releasing our desires in this feast of delight: draw us out of hidden places and centers of conformity to feel your laughter and live your pleasure. AMEN

HYMN Community of Christ (NCH 314)

1 Community of Christ,
who make the Cross your own,
live out your creed and risk your life
for God alone:

The God who wears your face,
to whom all worlds belong,
whose children are of every race
and every song.

2 Community of Christ,
look past the church's door
and see the refugee, the hungry,
and the poor.

Take hands with the oppressed,
the jobless in your street,
take towel and water, that you wash
your neighbor's feet.

3 Community of Christ,
through whom the word must sound -
cry out for justice and for peace
the whole world 'round:
Disarm the powers that war
and all that can destroy,
turn bombs to bread, and tears of anguish
into joy.

DISMISSAL

Friends, how good and pleasant it is to be together, hearing the stories of the saints among us. But now the service is ended — and now the wider service begins. Go in peace —

into the world, for the love of the world!

POSTLUDE “Es Wolle Gott Uns Gnadigsein” - Pachelbel

SOMETHING TO PONDER FROM DEACON ERIK SOLDWEDEL - JULY 19 & 26, 2026

Following what I wrote last week about change, I offer you this brief quote from Frederick Buechner originally published in his book *The Sacred Journey*:

“...GOD SPEAKS TO us through our lives, we often too easily say. Something speaks anyway, spells out some sort of godly or godforsaken meaning to us through the alphabet of our years, but often it takes many years and many further spellings out before we start to glimpse, or think we do, a little of what that meaning is. Even then we glimpse it only dimly, like the first trace of dawn on the rim of night, and even then it is a meaning that we cannot fix and be sure of once and for all because it is always incarnate meaning and thus as alive and changing as we are ourselves alive and changing.”

Frederick Buechner (July 11, 1926 – August 15, 2022) authored thirty-nine books and was a Presbyterian minister, noted preacher and theologian. His career spanned six decades, and you will find that I refer to him quite often as he is one of my favorite contemporary theologians. Buechner is one of my favorite “go to” theologians. I not only find clarity in his words but also inspiration, and because of that, I reference and quote him on a regular basis.

In last week's message, I urged you all to take the summer to reflect on the sacred stories shared each week. I wrote about my grandparents' storytelling from the “Old Country”, and my day dreaming as I look to the sky as I lie on the beach or the warm summer grass.

I suggest that you too may recall the changes in your own life. May your recollections bring dreams for the future for you, your families, and your spiritual home, The Church of the Redeemer, Morristown. Let your mind dream big: the change you wish for this parish church as you embrace the foundations of our church expressed in faith, hope, and love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

* **The Serendipity Stitchers** welcome you. 1st and 3rd **Tuesdays** at **1:30 p.m. July 7 and July 21.** Our gatherings are always full of laughter, delicious treats, and plenty of good company. No experience necessary. Please get in touch with Veronica for more information.

* **The Book Group meets online at 7pm:**

7/27 THE HEART GOES LAST - Margaret Atwood *The Heart Goes Last* is a vivid, urgent vision of development and decay, freedom and surveillance, struggle and hope—and the timeless workings of the human heart.

8/31 There are Rivers in the Sky - Elif Shafak

Please support your local bookshop and Redeemer by ordering from our online Bookshop. <https://bookshop.org/shop/Redeemer>

***Earth Ministry & Environmental Sustainability** There's news on New Jersey's environmental front that we need to know about. While the 50 year moratorium on nuclear power has been lifted, it looks like we are planning on endlessly increasing our energy consumption, which some people call reality, but it is also very disturbing not to question this assumption. Leading the way is the construction of data centers in the state. Gov. Sherril has signed some guidance, known as "guardrails," regarding this, looking like it is a very medium attempt to reign this in. We need to be learning about this and what is going on in the state. One also needs to question the use of AI, its knowledge base and bias, and what it is doing with all of this info- about us.

- <https://tinyurl.com/2pwydj5s> & map on data centers in NJ: <https://tinyurl.com/bdm4a37s>

Garden of Hope: Thank you to those who came to the Garden Pop-Up session Thursday morning. The garden is growing by leaps and bounds! It is wonderful to be a part of creation in this way and do justice by helping to feed those who are food insecure with this ministry. Peg can be reached at [pegonplanetearth\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:pegonplanetearth(at)gmail.com) or see her on Sundays. Thank you!

Keep updated with all that is going on at Redeemer

Visit our website: <https://redeermorristown.org/> for further information and to sign up for our newsletter.

Please "like" and check out our Facebook page at <http://bit.ly/FBchurch> or follow us on Instagram - @RedeemerMorristown - <http://bit.ly/Instachurch>.

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