

March 21, 2021
Fifth of Lent

We Gather In God's Presence

Lighting the Christ Candle

Gathering In Song MV 90 "Don't Be Afraid"

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger, my love is stronger than your fear.

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger, and I have promised, promised to be always near.

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation – see last page ...

Call to Worship

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Even in these uncertain times,
especially in these endless days,

God is fulfilling the promise of the new covenant.

Wherever we are, wherever we worship,
at home, outside, in every sacred space,

may our hearts be filled with love.

Through quarantine and lockdowns,
through lonely days and hopes that fizzled,

God has held tight to our hands to lead us through.

God's Word continues to shape us, to encourage us,
to challenge us to faithful lives in these times.

In new ways, sometimes uncomfortable, we have learned
to reach out to neighbors, friends, family, even strangers.

**Beyond these moments and days, we remain ready
to serve all of God's people, to share in this covenant of grace.**

Hymn VU 415 "God, We Praise You for the Morning" vs. 1-5

1 God, we praise you for the morning;
hope springs forth with each new day,
new beginning, prayer, and promise,
joy in work and in play.

2 God, we praise you for creation,
mountains, seas, and prairie land.
Waking souls find joy and healing
in your bountiful hand.

3 God, we praise you for compassion,
all the loving that you show;
human touching, tears, and laughter,
help your children to grow.

4 God, we praise you for your Spirit,
Comforter and daily friend,
restless searcher, gentle teacher,
strength and courage you send.

5 God, we praise you for the Saviour,
come that we may know your ways.
In his loving, dying, rising,
Christ is Lord of our days.

Opening Prayer (unison)

In these uncertain times of empty moments and foggy brains, we are reminded that you forget more than we will ever know, you forgive so much more than we are capable of messing up, you crack open our hardened hearts to write your name on them. Covenant God, You are the Heart that seeks our hearts, yet time and again we turn from you. There have been so many opportunities to care for others this past year, yet we have hidden ourselves behind closed doors and closed hearts, feasting on worry and fear, listening to the musings of politicians and celebrities, buying into conspiracy theories and intolerance instead of your Word of hope. Write your covenant of grace upon our hearts that we might become the accepting, compassionate, forgiving people that you created us and Jesus showed us how to be. In his name we pray. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Anthem: The Lord Bless You And Keep You - John Rutter arr. Bobby Goulter (one-man choir)

Time for the Young and the Young @ 

Hymn VU 703 "In the Bulb There Is a Flower"

1 In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

2 There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

3 In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer

Creator God, we rejoice in all life! We rejoice in this beautiful world! Thank you, God, for deserts, dry and forbidding, yet bursting with life at even the hint of rain. Thank you for mountains, stunning and humbling. Thank you for forests, deep and quieting. Thank you for the prairies, vast and ennobling. Thank you for oceans, teeming and unknown. Thank you for farmland, rich and bountiful. Thank you for clean air, life-giving, yet unseen. Thank you for clean water, sparkling and clear. Thank you, God, for giving us your life, truly, all good gifts are from you; all that we have is yours.

Jesus, you came that we might have abundant life, a life filled with your grace and your spirit. Thank you for physical and spiritual health. Thank you for your church, the very Body of Christ, given to work

for justice for all, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. Thank you for Port Lambton Pastoral Charge of the United Church of Canada as they live out your calling. Thank you for those who love us and help keep us healthy and fill our lives with joy. Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to be our comforter.

Holy Spirit, when concerns burden us and words fail us, you intervene for us with sighs that go beyond words. Sigh with us as we think of your children of every tribe, and religion, those who are faced with daily terrorism and war, those who are struggling with the effects of natural disaster, those who live in fear of their leaders, those who live without hope for the future. This week we pray especially for the peoples of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Sigh with us as we think of those who mourn the death of loved ones, especially the friends and family of John Freymond and Sandy Wieczorek Sigh with us as we think of those who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from medical treatment, especially Rob Ford, Roger Henry, Mary Kaiser, Bobby LaRush, Andy Linell, Lisa Sawyer, Phil Shelley, Marilyn Smith (Union), and their loved ones, and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

We gather all of these prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, the Christ, who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, and who taught us to pray, saying:

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

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

In the gospel lesson for today Jesus says, "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Likewise I say to you, if we hoard the blessings we receive from God, they are of little benefit, yet if we share our blessings, great things can come from them.... the hungry can eat, the homeless are housed, the sick are healed, the lonely are visited. O God, as you write upon our hearts, soften them with your love. And as they become softer, may we become increasingly aware of the needs of all around us, in every part of the world, and may we become as generous, loving God, in sharing our blessings. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Responsive Reading: Psalm 119:9-16 VU 838

How shall the young be faultless in their way?

By keeping to your words.

**With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not stray from your commandments.**

I treasure your word in my heart

for fear I should sin against you.

Blessed are you, O God; teach me your statutes.

With my lips I proclaim all the judgements you have uttered.

**I find more joy in the way of your commandments
than in all manner of riches.**

I will meditate on your precepts; I will give heed to your ways.

**I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.**

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

*For those of you who are interested, the other readings for this week are: **Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33.***

You can look them up on www.biblegateway.com and search for the passage.....

in any translation you prefer (ie. King James - KJV, NKJV, NRSV, etc.)

Hymn MV 154 “Deep in Our Hearts”

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.

Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
deep in our hearts there is a common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Meditation: “Godstalking”

We Go Forth, Serving God

Hymn VU 421 "Lead On, O Cloud of Presence"

1 Lead on, O cloud of Presence, the exodus
is come.
In wilderness and desert our tribe shall make
its home.
Our slavery left behind us,
new hopes within us grow.
We seek the land of promise where milk and
honey flow.

2 Lead on, O fiery Pillar, we follow yet with
fears,
but we shall come rejoicing though joy be
born of tears.
We are not lost, though wandering,
for by your light we come,
and we are still God's people. The journey is
our home.

3 Lead on, O God of freedom, and guide us on our way,
and help us trust the promise through struggle and delay.
We pray our sons and daughters
may journey to that land
where justice dwells with mercy, and love is law's demand.

Commissioning and Benediction

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With the covenant of grace written on our hearts, let us go forth
**to share compassion with those
who struggle in these endless days.**

With the covenant of hope written on our hearts, let us go forth
**to continue to care for the hungry,
to comfort the lonely and grieving,
to become a family for the forgotten.**

With the covenant of peace written on our hearts, let us go forth
**to be serenity in moments of despair,
to whisper words of gentleness to all.**

Sung Response: VU 425 "God, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing" vs 1

God, dismiss us with your blessing;
fill our hearts with joy and peace;
let us each, your love possessing,
triumph in redeeming grace;
O refresh us, O refresh us,
travelling through the wilderness.

Announcements.....

Scripture Lessons for next week:

Liturgy of the Palms:

Mark 1:1-11 or John 12:12-16; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philipians 2:5-11; Mark 14:1 – 15:47