

March 27, 2022
Fourth Sunday of Lent

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: " Jesus Paid it All" In a setting of Franz Liszt Consolation 111, John Agape.
Arr. by Cindy Berry

Lenten Liturgy Written by Jen Dresser, *Gathering*, Lent/Easter 2016, page 67. Used with permission.

In Jesus, we find light for the world, but sometimes we prefer to live in the shadows. Sometimes, we prefer not to see what happens in our own emotional and spiritual life. Sometimes, we prefer not to know what happens in the world around us. And in the shadows, we stumble on the rocks. When we choose not to see or know, we choose to turn away from God.

(rock is placed, pink candle is extinguished)

The rock that causes us to stumble.

May God's spirit walk with us.

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.

Moment of Silent Reflection

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

Call to Worship

We took the lives that God gave us as a gift,

and squandered them far from God; in the land of sin.

Slowly we came to our senses,

and started the journey, fearful and ashamed, back to God's presence.

As we approach the end of our journey,

We see God, running out to greet us and welcome us with open arms.

Let us worship our God and celebrate in God's presence.

Hymn VU 108 "Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights"

Throughout these Lenten days and nights
we turn to walk the inward way,
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,
we live in hope till Easter Day.

The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,
who found in weakness greater power,
embraces us, though lost and flawed,
and leads us to his Rising Hour.

We bear the silence, cross and pain
of human burdens, human strife,
while sisters, brothers help sustain
our courage till the Feast of Life.

And though the road is hard and steep,
the Spirit ever calls us on through
Calvary's dying, dark and deep,
until we see the coming Dawn.

So let us choose the path of One
who wore, for us, the crown of thorn,
and slept in death that we might wake
to life on Resurrection Morn!

Rejoice, O sons and daughters! Sing
and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings
on Easter Day will rise again!

Opening Prayer (*unison*)

Holy One, you are the Prodigal Father, lavishing forgiveness and grace on each of us according to our individual need. Sometimes that means that we are treated differently from one another, and we, like the older brother, become resentful of what we perceive as preferential treatment. We don't see others as brothers and sisters, but as those who are competing with us for your grace. We are quick to see their shortcomings, and slow to look into our own hardened hearts. Forgive us God. Help us to realize that your grace is boundless; that there is no end of its supply; that there is enough for us, and all of our sisters and brothers in this world. Help us to share that knowledge and extend your grace to those we meet this week, that they may know that they too matter. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Anthem: "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" Fernando Ortega

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5MB9v_KjwY

Time for the Young and the Young @ 

Hymn VU 271 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven;
there is no place where earth's failings
have such gracious judgement given.

There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that Christ has shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.

Troubled souls, why will you scatter
like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts, why will you wander
from a love so true and deep?

For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

Responsive Reading: Psalm 32

Blessed are those whose offences are forgiven,
whose sin has been put away.

**Blessed are those to whom God imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

When I kept silence, my body wasted away,
while I groaned all the day long.

**For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my strength dried up as in a summer drought.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, my guilt I did not hide.

**I said: 'I will confess my sins to God';
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you in time of trouble;

when great floodwater rises, it shall not come near them.

You are a hiding place for me,
you will preserve me from trouble;

you will surround me with shouts of deliverance.

I will teach you, and guide you in the way you should go.

I will keep you under my eye and instruct you.

Be not like a horse or mule, without understanding,

whose course must be checked with bit and bridle.

Many pains are in store for the wicked,

**but whoever trusts in God,
is surrounded by steadfast love.**

Scripture: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable:

“There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

*For those of you who are interested, the other readings for this week are: **Joshua 5:9-12;** **2 Corinthians 5:16-21.** 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.)*

Meditation: “Who are you?”

Hymn VU 348 “O Love, How Deep” vs. 1-4

O love, how deep, how broad, how high!
It fills the heart with ecstasy,
that God, in Jesus Christ, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake.

God sent no angel to our race
of higher or of lower place,
but wore the robe of human frame,
and freely to this lost world came.

For us he was baptized, and bore
a holy fast, and hungered sore;
for us temptations sharply knew;
for us the tempter overthrew.

For us he prayed, for us he taught,
for us great daily works were wrought,
by words and signs, and actions, thus
still seeking not himself, but us.

We Respond To God's Grace

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

Let us not be grumbling and resentful of the generosity of others, as the older brother in the story was. Rather, let us, with joy and hope, be generous with our gifts, as the father in the story was, that others might be swept up into God's loving and gracious arms. Our tithes and other offerings will be received, via Canada Post or CanadaHelps, the offering plate, the mail slot at the church, or by e-transfer.

Offertory Hymn VU 542 "We Give You But Your Own"

We give you but your own, whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.

Offering Prayer

Gracious God, bless and transform all that we offer: our faltering steps, our brokenness, our hope, our risking, our hearts, that your covenant may be written on our hearts and that we may be a blessed and transformed covenant people who in turn will bless the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer

Eternal God, whose image lies in the hearts of all people,

We live among people: Whose languages are different from our own, whose faiths are foreign to us, whose ways we fail to understand. Help us to remember: That you embrace all people with your love, that all religion is a response to you, that the yearnings of other hearts are much like our own, and are known to you. Help us to recognize you in words of truth, things of beauty, and actions of love about us.

Prodigal Father, hear our prayers and lavish your grace upon those for whom we pray:

For the church around the world, we ask new life. This week we pray specifically for Central United Church in St. Thomas as they search for a new spiritual leader;

For all who minister we ask grace and wisdom;

For people of other faiths, we ask your diving blessing;

For those who cannot believe, we ask your faithful love;

For governors and rulers in every land, we ask your guidance;

For the peoples of the world, especially the people of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, that all may strive for justice and live in peace.

For those who live with war, terrorism, and violence, especially the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, Yemen, Israel/Palestine, and Afghanistan.

For people who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from treatment, we ask for your healing peace. Especially we pray for Ron Dickie, Jack, Marlene, Scott, Tucker, and their loved ones and caregivers and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

We lift all these prayers to you in Jesus' name, 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 sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn VU 260 "God Who Gives to Life Its Goodness"

God who gives to life its goodness, God creator of all joy,
God who gives to us our freedom, God who blesses tool and toy:
teach us now to laugh and praise you, deep within your praises sing,
till the whole creation dances for the goodness of its King.

God who fills the earth with beauty, God who binds each friend to friend,
God who names us co-creators God who wills that chaos end:
grant us now creative spirits, minds responsive to your mind,
hearts and wills your rule extending all our acts by Love refined.

Commissioning and Benediction

Go. Pray. Serve. Forgive. Celebrate.

We go – praying, serving, forgiving, and celebrating.

Be persistent in the way of God

Knowing that God's blessing rests upon you.

We go to share God's blessing with those we meet on the way.

Sung Response: VU 961 "Let Us, O God, Depart in Peace"

Let us, O God, depart in peace, who in your name are gathered here.

Disclose the brightness of your face, and be forever near.

Postlude: "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus" Helen H. Lemmel Arr. Martha Meir

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALL:

Siloam United Church is hosting **Expressions of Love**, a concert featuring singer/songwriter Kelly Walker, Actor/Singer Breanne Dietrich and Stratford Poet, David Stones on Saturday, April 23, 2022 at 7:30 pm. Admission is by freewill offering at the door in support of the work and outreach of Siloam United Church.

DORCHESTER:

Reminder: There will be a short congregational meeting following the worship service today!

UNION:

March Outreach: St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank suggestions: canned brown beans, pasta sauce and dry noodles, canned chili, stew, soups, jam and peanut butter. You may deposit these items in the box at the back of the sanctuary, or send a monetary donation to St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank, P. O. Box 20025, St. Thomas, ON, N5P 2X3

Lectionary Readings for next week:

April 3, 2022 (Fifth Sunday of Lent)

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8