

March 26, 2023
Fifth Sunday of Lent
We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude:

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

Moment of Silent Reflection

Hymn: VU 385 “Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers”

Spirit divine, attend our prayers, and make this house your home;
descend with all your gracious powers: O come, great Spirit, come!

Come as the light: to us reveal our emptiness and woe;
and lead us in those paths of life where all the righteous go.

Come as the wind: sweep clean away what dead within us lies,
and search and freshen all our souls with living energies.

Come as the fire and purge our hearts like sacrificial flame;
let our whole life an offering be to our Redeemer's name.

Spirit divine, attend our prayers: make a lost world your home;
descend with all your gracious powers: O come, great Spirit, come!

Lenten Candle Liturgy

*Written by Won Hur. **Gathering**, Lent/Easter 2023, pages 66-69. Used with permission.*

O Jesus, you wept over your friend Lazarus.

Do you still weep for us?

Do you weep when forest fires rage, when homes are burnt, animals die, and the smoke blows?

Do you weep as floods destroy homes and livelihoods?

Do you weep for those suffering from illness and for their families? Do you weep for those who live with a myriad of worries, anxiety, and depression?

Do you weep for injustice, for those who experience ongoing racism, bullying, and discrimination of all sorts?

Do you weep for those who have no more tears to shed, who have no more prayers to say, who have no more dreams to dream?

Then we are willing to shed our tears with you. We shed tears for the world you love.

The fifth candle is extinguished.

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.

Prayer (*unison*)

O Christ, who weeps for us and with us, we know that you are in our pain and in our suffering. We also know that you are in our deepest longings. We long for your kingdom to come. We pray that our tears of sorrow will lead to tears of joy. Then may our tears of joy turn into a celebration as we dance our way into a revolution of your love. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Anthem:

Time for the Young and the Young @ 

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

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.

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.

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.

Psalm 130 *refrain 2*

Refrain: Out of the depths I cry to you, my hope is in your promise true.

Out of the depths have I called to you.

O God, hear my cry!

Let your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy.

If you should keep account of what is done amiss,

O God, who could stand?

**But there is forgiveness with you,
therefore we will honour you.**

Refrain: Out of the depths I cry to you, my hope is in your promise true.

I wait for you, God;

my soul waits, and in your word is my hope.

**My soul waits for God
more than the watchers long for morning,
more than the watchers long for morning.**

O Israel, wait in hope,

for with God there is love unfailing.

**With God is great power to redeem,
to redeem you, Israel, from all your sins.**

Refrain: Out of the depths I cry to you, my hope is in your promise true.

Scripture: John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him.

*The other readings for this week are: **Ezekiel 37:1-14; Romans 8:6-11***

Hymn VU 611 “Out of the Depths, O God, We Call to You”

Out of the depths, O God, we call to you.
Wounds of the past remain, affecting all we do.
Facing our lives, we need your love so much.
Here in this community, heal us by your touch.

Out of the depths of fear, O God, we speak.
Breaking the silences, the searing truth we seek.
Safe among friends, our grief and rage we share.
Here in this community, hold us in your care.

God of the loving heart, we praise your name.
Dance through our lives and loves; anoint with Spirit flame.
Your light illumines each familiar face.
Here in this community, meet us with your grace.

Meditation: “Jesus wept”

We Respond To God’s Grace

Invitation to Invest in God’s Mission

Today we are invited to be part of a resurrection story. Our offerings this morning will join together, just like the dry bones joined together in Ezekiel’s vision. When joined together, they will bring new life to this congregation, and to God’s work throughout the world.

Offertory Hymn VU 218 “We Praise You, O God”

We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring.
We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;
we bless your holy name, glad praises we sing.

Prayer of Dedication

God of life, lay sinews and flesh on the dry bones of the gifts that we offer. Breathe life into them that they may bring hope in our congregation and in our community, across Canada and around the world. In the name of him in whom we have light and life, Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord’s Prayer (VU 959)

Jesus, vulnerable and alone in the desert you faced the force of evil and withstood temptation. Be with us in our struggles and temptations, that by your strength we may reject evil in whatever form it comes. Jesus, you wept over the state of Israel, be with our cities, our villages.

This week we pray especially for the people of the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia.

Be with our places of worship, especially St. Andrew’s – Westminster United Church, and their minister, the Rev. Sue Browning.

Jesus, you wept alone at Gethsemane, be with all who feel alone, all who face difficult decisions. Jesus, you wept, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Be with all who are tortured, all who are victims, all who suffer from disaster, whether of human or natural origin.

Jesus, you wept over the death of Lazarus, be with all who grieve: esp. the friends and family of Jack Killins, and Ken Sheeller.

Jesus, you offered up prayers with loud cries and tears, hear our prayers, our requests for those who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention, or recovering from medical treatment, especially we pray for ..., and their loved ones and caregivers and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

Jesus, you wept in sympathy and frustration, you know our pains and our joys. Be with us this day and always, as we pray, singing,

**Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever.**

Amen.

Hymn VU 586 "We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection"

We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.

We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life in Christ.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.

We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
including all in circles of our love.

Commissioning and Benediction

In the valley of dry bones, Ezekiel prophesied, bone joined to bone, sinew, flesh and skin appeared, and the ruach of God breathed new life into a vast multitude.

In Bethany, Jesus called out to Lazarus who lay in his burial tomb, and he came out, raised to new life.

Sometimes we feel helpless, hopeless, and despairing, like a heap of dry bones.

Go, confident that death, or what feels like death, is not the end,
that death is only the doorway to new life.

Sometimes we feel broken, crushed, and breathless, like someone laid in a tomb.

Go, confident that God will breathe new life into us too.

Sometimes we feel all alone, like sisters abandoned by their best friend.

Go, confident that God is with us, in life, in death, in life beyond death.

We go with joy, sharing this good news with all whom we meet.

May it be so.

Amen

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:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ALL:

In response to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and northern Syria, The United Church of Canada is working with partners in the Middle East Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and the Humanitarian Coalition to show tangible support for the people of Türkiye and Syria. To contribute to the United Church response, you can mail a cheque to:

The United Church of Canada Philanthropy
Unit - Emergency Response 3250 Bloor Street
West, Suite 200 Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4

Please be sure to note "Emergency Response—Türkiye" on the face of your cheque.

Or, go online to:

<https://www.gifttool.com/donations/Donate?ID=1955&AID=2274&PID=6564>

Part Two of our study “The Heart of Christianity” runs Tuesdays at Two for the seven weeks of Lent, from February 21 until April 4 inclusive. We will plan to meet in person at Dorchester United Church, with a zoom link for those not comfortable or able to attend in person. If you are interested in joining this study, please contact Rev. Mark. (Please read Chapter 11 Heart and Home: Being Christian in an Age of Pluralism, for the 28th)

UNION:

Broadview subscriptions are to be renewed by March 31. Please let Roberta Gillard know if you do not wish to continue receiving this magazine. The group rate for each subscription is \$25.

Outreach for March – Inn Out of the Cold.

personnel hygiene products...shaving cream, deodorant, combs, brushes. art

supplies...paper, markers, crossword puzzles.

snack food - individually packaged....water, drink boxes, cereal bars, pudding/fruit cups. tea,

coffee, hot chocolate

paper cups - no lids

Lectionary Readings for next week:

(April 2, Sixth Sunday of Lent, a.k.a. Palm/Passion Sunday)

Liturgy of the Palms

Matthew 21:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Liturgy of the Passion

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66, OR Matthew 27:11-54