

February 18, 2024  
First Sunday of Lent

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "Jesus Paid it All" John T. Grape. Arr. Victor Labenske

**Extinguishing a Lenten Candle** *written by Won Hur. Used with permission. The United Church of Canada*

We suffer when we do not know who we are.

**We are constantly tempted by the seduction of power,  
the glamour of wealth, and ego-gratifying attention.**

We are drawn into these temptations because we forget who we are and whose we are.

**When we forget that we are created in God's image,**

we lose our connection to our soul and to our God.

**Like fish out of water, we lose our connection to that which gives us life.**

We then live with consequences, which are hard to bear,

for ourselves, for our society, and for our world.

*The first candle is extinguished.*

**Refrain:** 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:**

**O God, we really do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from you. Feed us with your wisdom and your truth. Quench our deepest thirst to find the peace that you offer to us. In this journey of Lent, travel with us as we seek to find our true self, the self you have created us to be. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

**Moment of Silent Reflection**

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

**Call to Worship**

Hope in the Lord. God is our strength and our shield.

**Our hearts rejoice in the Lord our God.**

**We trust in God's holy name.**

The word of the Lord is right and true,

**for God is faithful in all things.**

The earth is full of God's unfailing love.

**God's dream stands firm forever;**

**the desire of God's heart through all generations.**

Praise God's name, now and always.

**Hymn: VU 105 "Dust and Ashes Touch Our Face"**

Dust and ashes touch our face,

mark our failure and our falling.

Holy Spirit, come,

walk with us tomorrow, take us as disciples,

washed and wakened by your calling.

Take us by the hand and lead us,

lead us through the desert sands,

bring us living water, Holy Spirit, come.

Dust and ashes soil our hands –  
greed of market, pride of nation.  
Holy Spirit, come,  
walk with us tomorrow,  
as we pray and struggle  
through the meshes of oppression.  
Take us by the hand and lead us,  
lead us through the desert sands,  
bring us living water, Holy Spirit, come.

Dust and ashes choke our tongue  
in the wasteland of depression.  
Holy Spirit, come,  
walk with us tomorrow,  
through all gloom and grieving  
to the paths of resurrection.  
Take us by the hand and lead us,  
lead us through the desert sands,  
bring us living water, Holy Spirit, come.

#### **Opening Prayer (*unison*)**

**God of the exodus and the wilderness, you made a covenant with Noah and creation and all generations. Just as Jesus renewed the covenant at his baptism, we too renewed the covenant at our own baptism. And, like Jesus following his baptism, we too face our own times of testing. In times of testing, we forget what you have done for us. You give us everything we need, yet we often remain unsatisfied. You trust us to care for creation, yet we often abuse that trust and spoil Your creation. You show us the way we are to follow, yet we often continue on the path of self-indulgence and self-centeredness. We ask for Your direction, Your patience, and Your love; in the name of Jesus Christ, who in spite of his time of testing, remained faithful to You. Amen.**

#### ***We Are Blessed By God***

**Ministry of Music:** “In That Morning” by R. Nathaniel Dett arr. Miss Dorothy Mayor

*Nancy Quinn*

**Time for the Young and the Young @** 

**Hymn: VU 348** “O Love, How Deep”  
O love, how deep, how broad, how high!  
It fills the heart with ecstasy,  
that God, in Jesus Christ, should take  
our mortal frame 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.

For us to wicked foes betrayed,  
scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed,  
he bore the shameful cross and death;  
for us at length gave up his breath.

For us he rose from death again,  
for us he went on high to reign,  
for us he sent his Spirit here  
to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

To God whose boundless love has won  
salvation for us through the Son,  
to God all praise and glory be  
both now and through eternity.

### **Psalm 25 VU 752**

**R: To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.**

To you, O God, I lift my soul; my God, in you I trust.  
Let me not be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

**Let none who wait for you be shamed;  
let them be shamed who wantonly break faith.**

Show me your ways; teach me your paths.

**Lead me in your truth and teach me;  
for you are God my saviour.**

**For you I wait all the day long.**

**R: To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.**

Remember your mercy, O God, and your steadfast love,  
for they are as old as time.

**Do not remember the sins and offences of my youth.  
According to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O God!**

**R: To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.**

You are upright and good, O God,  
therefore you show the path to those who go astray.

**You guide the humble to do what is right,  
and teach the lowly your way.**

All your ways are loving and sure

**for those who keep your covenant and commandments.**

**R: To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.**

**Scripture:** Mark 1:9-15 Baptism, Testing, Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

*The other readings for this week are: **Genesis 9:8-17; 1 Peter 3:18-22***

**Meditation:** "Tried, Tested, and ....."

**Hymn VU 114** "Forty Days and Forty Nights"

Forty days and forty nights you were fasting in the wild,  
forty days and forty nights tempted, and yet undefiled.

Sunbeams scorching all the day, chilly dewdrops nightly shed;  
prowling beasts about your way; stones your pillow, earth your bed.

Shall no we your trial share, and from earthly joys abstain,  
fasting with unceasing prayer, strong with you to suffer pain?

If temptations, vexing sore, flesh or spirit should assail,  
you their vanquisher before, grant we may not faint or fail.

Keep, oh keep us, Saviour dear, ever constant by your side;  
that with you we may appear at the-eternal Eastertide.

### **We Respond To God's Grace**

**Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer**

God of morning mists and raging flood waters, as we enter this wilderness season, we acknowledge that our parched souls yearn for your life-giving waters of grace. Hear us as we pray:

For your church. Rescue it from apathy and ignorance that it may once again offer hope to the world. This week we pray especially for London Road West United Church in Sarnia, and their spiritual leader Pastor Roxanne Bale;

For the nations. May they recognize the rights of all peoples, and seek an end to oppression for all. Especially this week we pray for the people of France, Germany, and Monaco;

For the parched lives of souls who long to feel the life-giving river of your grace, those who endure too much sorrowful suffering, too much inexplicable injustice, too much dark despair;

For all who mourn a loss, and especially for those who mourn the loss of a loved one, especially the friends and families of Don Rolson and Stephen Fulton.

For all who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from medical treatment, especially Phil Hicks, and their loved ones and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our own hearts....

God who causes the rains to fall on the just and the unjust alike, you who shower your creation with blessings that flow and flow and flow, hear the prayers of a grateful people, a people who do not take your gifts for granted: Gifts of life and love, within families and among friends; Gifts we celebrate in ways we can put into words and in ways that go beyond all words,

Baptizing God, Spirit of transformation, you who wrestle your people into new life, turn our lives around; turn your church around; turn your world around. Keep your kingdom coming in surprising acts of foolish kindness, and in amazing moments of daring grace, for we offer our lives to the One in whom your new creation has already begun, the very one who taught us to pray, saying,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
you 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 yours is the kingdom the power  
and the glory, forever and ever.  
Amen.**

### **Invitation to Invest in God's Mission**

The gospel reading for today recounts, in 7 short verses, the baptism and temptation of Jesus, and the beginning of his ministry. While in the wilderness, angels, literally messengers of God, waited on him. You and I are called to be angels, messengers of God, to wait on the dispossessed and marginalized in our community and around the world. Our tithes and offerings will be received.

**Offertory Hymn** *to tune Old 100<sup>th</sup> written by G.W. Dub Shepherd. Used with permission.*

Praise God throughout these forty days;  
Praise Christ, our Lord, whom God did raise;  
And praise the Spirit who imparts  
God's love in Christ into our hearts.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

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 people of your covenant.  
In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Hymn VU 650 "O God of Bethel"**

O God of Bethel, by whose hand your people still are fed,  
who through this earthly pilgrimage have all your servants led:  
  
our vows, our prayers, we now present before your throne of grace.  
God of past ages, be the God of each succeeding race.  
  
Through each perplexing path of life our wandering footsteps guide;  
give us each day our daily bread, and shelter fit provide.  
  
O spread your covering wings around, till all our wanderings cease,  
and at our God's beloved abode our souls arrive in peace.

## **Commissioning and Benediction**

May the blessing of God give us strength for the journey;

**May the Spirit of wisdom give us vision for the road;**

And may the love of Christ make us caring companions;

**as together we go forth in this season of Lent.**

May it be so.

**Amen.**

**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.

**Postlude:** “Savior, Like A Shepherd Lead Us” with “He Leadeth Me” William Bradbury arr. Cindy Berry

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The **Annual Congregational Meeting** will be held, following worship, on Sunday, March 3, 2024.

**Belmont United Church** is hosting a mid-week Lenten supper and worship series on Wednesdays from February 21<sup>st</sup> to March 20<sup>th</sup> (with the first session on Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m., following Pancake Supper.) A light supper will commence at 6:00 p.m., followed by a brief worship service at 6:45 p.m.

Suggested donation for supper is \$5. Worship leaders include Karlene Kimber, Lynne Allin, Mary Dillon, David Dillon, and Mark Perry.

## **LECTIONARY READINGS:**

February 25 – 2<sup>nd</sup> of Lent

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38