

February 25, 2024
Second Sunday of Lent

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "The Lords My Shepherd" in a setting of Handel's Largo. Arr. Cindy Berry

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

We live unaware of the spiritual realities around us.

We fail to grasp the reality of God's presence in our world.

Like Nicodemus, we cannot grasp the kingdom of God.

Thus, we muddle through life, suffering the consequences of our lack of attentiveness.

Thus, we bear the impact of climate change in the pursuit of economic gains.

We live with enormous amounts of plastic waste in the name of convenience.

We live with micro-aggressions and systemic racism.

We mourn our ignorance and under-developed religious beliefs.

The second candle is extinguished.

Refrain: MV 90 "Don't Be Afraid" Words: John L. Bell and Graham Maule, Music: John L. Bell

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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 pray to be born anew, in order to grasp the meaning of your kingdom. We long to discover our authentic selves as we shed our false selves in this Lenten season. May your truth set us free.

May we abide in your spirit of truth so that we can live a life worthy of eternity. Amen.

Moment of Silent Reflection

Call to Worship

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Lent calls us to journey, this and every day,
following Jesus wherever he leads us.

Lent calls us to journey:

**to the place where God covenants with us,
to receive the new names we are given.**

Lent calls us to worship together,
to tell future generations the good news.

**Lent calls us to practice justice,
to bring God's hope to all people.**

Lent calls us to faithful living,
to trust the One who gives us life.

**Lent calls each of us to take up our cross,
to trust the One who bears it with us.**

Lent calls us to journey with God.

**Let us worship God, who walks with us,
this and every day.**

Hymn: VU 101 "Songs of Thankfulness and Praise"

Words: Christopher Wordsworth Music: Jacob Hintze In the Public Domain

Songs of thankfulness and praise, Jesus Christ, to you we raise,

manifested by the star to the sages from afar;

branch of royal David's stem in your birth at Bethlehem;

anthems be to you addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream, Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
and at Cana wedding guest, in your Godhead manifest;
manifest in power divine, changing water into wine;
anthems be to you addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest in making whole palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight, quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will, ever bringing good from ill;
anthems be to you addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

Grant us grace to see you, Lord, mirrored in your holy Word;
with your grace our lives endow, grace to imitate you now,
that we like to you may be at your great epiphany,
anthems be to you addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

Opening Prayer (*unison*)

Blessed Saviour, you are the Messiah, the Christ, God's anointed One. You brought us a message from God, reminding us that we are God's beloved. You reminded us of God's dream for us and for all of creation; the Kingdom of God we call it, and we pray for it to be fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven. And then you did something we would rather not have heard; you called us to deny ourselves, and start building that kingdom; start living as though God's dream was a reality, here and now. To do that, we risk being rejected by others, we risk suffering and hardship, and in some places, we risk our very lives to do this. Take this cup from us, Lord, for we cannot drink from it. Yet, not our will, but yours be done. Grant us the vision of your dream for us, and grant us the courage to make it a reality; to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to free the captive, to bind up the broken hearted, to comfort those who mourn, to joy in You in all that we do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

We Are Blessed By God

Ministry of Music: "Savior, Come and Dwell In Me" Words by Don Besig and Nancy Price,
Music by Don Besig

A New Creed

We are not alone,
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:
who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,

God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 344 “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds”

Words: John Newton Music: Alexander Robert Reinagle In the Public Domain

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer’s ear!

It soothes the sorrows, heals the wounds, and drives away all fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole, and calms the troubled breast;

‘tis manna to the hungry soul, and to the weary, rest.

Dear Name! the rock on which I build, my shield and hiding place,
my never-failing treasury, filled with boundless stores of grace.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend, my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End, accept the praise I bring.

The effort of my heart is weak, and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see you whom I seek, I’ll praise you as I ought.

Psalm 22:23-32 VU 746 parts 3 and 4

R: In the presence of your people I will praise your name.

Give praise, all you who fear God!

Proclaim God’s greatness, all you children of Jacob;

stand in awe, all you children of Israel!

For God has neither despised

nor scorned the poor in their distress.

You, O God, have not hidden your face from them.

You heard them when they called on you.

R: In the presence of your people I will praise your name.

You are the theme of my praise in the great assembly.

I will keep my promise in the presence of those who fear you.

Let the poor eat to satisfaction;

let those who seek you praise you.

May they be in good heart forever!

Let all the ends of the earth remember and turn to you, O God.

Let all the families of the nations bow down before you.

For yours is the dominion, O God,

you rule over the nations.

R: In the presence of your people I will praise your name.

Even all who sleep in the grave shall worship you;

those who go down into the dust shall bow down before you.

I too shall live for you.

Our children shall serve you,

and tell generations yet to come about you.

To a people yet unborn,

they shall make known the saving deeds you have done.

R: In the presence of your people I will praise your name.

Scripture: Mark 8:31-38 Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

*The other readings for this week are: **Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Romans 4:13-25***

Meditation: "Gospel? What gospel?"

Hymn VU 356 "Seek Ye First the Kingdom"

USE HYMN BOOKS

We Respond To God's Grace

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

In the gospel reading for today we hear these words: "those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the kingdom of God, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?" It's definitely risky to try to answer one of Jesus' questions, and I'm going to give it a shot anyway. What can they give in return for their life? Gratitude. Gratitude is something we can all give to God, our creator. We do this in many ways. One way we show our gratitude is when we care for God's most vulnerable and marginalized children, by feeding the hungry, by providing shelter for the homeless, by clothing the naked, by...you get the idea. Our tithes and other offerings will be received.

Offertory Hymn *to tune Old 100th 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

Life-changing God, accept these gifts which we offer in gratitude for your life-changing grace in our lives. May they be used to transform brokenness into wholeness, hunger and thirst into satisfaction, disease into healing, worry into peace, and sorrow into joy. May all people come to know the blessing of your grace, your peace, and your hope. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer

O God of creation, at our beginning your Spirit moved over the face of our planet. From the watery chaos you created life in its myriad forms. You created it, O God, and you sustain it, hold it in existence. You provide us with fertile soil and abundant sunshine by which our food grows. You bless the planet with rain, maintaining the waters of life. We give you thanks, O God, for your continuing love and care. You call us into community with all creation. In your covenant relationship with us, you challenge us to see ourselves as

part of the interconnected web of life. You call us to show concern not only for those whom we identify as being like us, but also those whose lives are very different from our own. Hear us then, compassionate God, as we bring to you our concerns for our troubled world. We offer our prayers not only for the human communities of which we are a part, but also for the ecological communities that sustain our lives.

We pray for your church around the world, and here in Southwestern Ontario. This week we pray especially for South Caradoc United Church, who continue to worship you and serve their community even in the absence of a church building or a regular spiritual leader.

We pray for all people of every tribe, race and religion, especially this week we pray for the people of Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

We pray for those who mourn a loss, especially the friends and family of Doug Busche, Lorna Freymond, Richard Fulton, and David Woods..

We pray for those who are ill or dying, awaiting medical treatment or recovering from medical intervention in their lives: especially ..., and their loved ones and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our own hearts...

We gather together all our concerns and offer them up 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 your name.
Your kingdom come,
your 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.**

Hymn VU 715 "Come, We That Love" Words: Isaac Watts Music: Aaron Williams In the Public Domain
Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known,
join in a song with sweet accord, and thus surround the throne.

Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God;
but children of the heavenly King may speak their joys abroad.

The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets
before we reach the heavenly fields or walk the golden streets.

Then let our songs abound, and every tear be dry;
we're marching through Emmanuel's ground, to fairer worlds on high.

Commissioning and Benediction

Go with God as you journey through this Lenten season.

We go, seeking the new name given to everyone we meet.

Go with Jesus, following wherever he may lead.

We go, leaving our fears and our desires behind us.

Go with the Spirit, ever full of surprises.

We go, sharing the good news of the Kingdom of God with all. 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: “The Way of the Cross Leads Home” Charles H. Gabriel Arr. Cindy Berry

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The **World Day of Prayer** service will be held at Reynolds Creek United Church in Putnam on Friday, March 1 at 1 p.m. This year’s service was written by the women of Palestine.

Belmont United Church is hosting a mid-week Lenten supper and worship series on Wednesdays from February 21st to March 20th (with the first session on Tuesday, February 13th 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:

March 3 – 3rd of Lent

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22