

**Sunday March 9, 2025**  
**First Sunday of Lent**

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "Lord, I Want to be a Christian" American Folk Hymn. Arranged by Cindy Berry

**Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation**

**Hymn VU 107** "Sunday's Palms Are Wednesday's Ashes" Words: Rae E. Whitney, 1982. Music: Wilbur Held, 1993.  
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Sunday's palms are Wednesday's ashes  
as another Lent begins;  
thus we kneel before our Maker  
in contrition for our sins.  
We have marred baptismal pledges,  
in rebellion gone astray;  
now, returning, seek forgiveness;  
grant us pardon, God, this day!

We have failed to love our neighbours,  
their offences to forgive,  
have not listened to their troubles,  
nor have cared just how they live;  
we are jealous, proud, impatient,  
loving over-much our things;  
may the yielding of our failings  
be our Lenten offering.

We are hasty to judge others,  
blind to proof of human need;  
and our lack of understanding  
demonstrates our inner greed;  
we have wasted earth's resources;  
want and suffering we've ignored;  
come and cleanse us, then restore us;  
make new hearts within us, Lord!

**Lenten Candle Liturgy** written by Jim McKean. **Gathering**, Lent/Easter 2025. Page 70. Used with permission.  
Today is the first Sunday of Lent. Ash Wednesday has passed. We have entered into a time of reflection as we proceed with Jesus toward Jerusalem. Once more, we are on a collective journey of faith as we travel toward Holy Week and its culmination at Easter. As we proceed through Lent, each Sunday's theme will be about the many covenants God has with God's people.

Today we begin with all the candles in our Lenten wreath lit. The six purple candles signify the royal status that Jesus has within our hearts and our minds. Also, there is the Christ candle, signifying the light of Christ in our world.

Today we mark the journey by extinguishing our first candle, even as we remember God's covenant of promise, made through a wandering Aramean.

*(first purple candle is extinguished)*

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

God of promise, we pray today in celebration of your grace-filled action in our lives. We celebrate the gift that is Jesus, and through Jesus, your covenant of promise. Focus us so we may be forever present on this journey of faith we take with Jesus to Jerusalem. Open us to your light of wisdom. Open us to a faith restored and renewed by the symbols that present themselves to us along this faith-filled journey. Amen.

### **Ministry of Music:**

#### **Apostles' Creed** VU 918

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

#### **Hymn VU 348** "O Love, How Deep" Words: from Latin, 15<sup>th</sup> C, translation Benjamin Webb 1854.

Vss. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7

Music: melody from Piae Cantiones. Adapted by Michael Praetorius, 1609.

Words, Music, and Adaptation in the Public Domain.

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

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

***We Open Ourselves to Receive God's Blessings***

**Responsive Reading: Psalm 91**

**And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,  
bear you on the breath of dawn,  
make you to shine like the sun,  
and hold you in the palm of my hand."**

You who dwell in the shelter of your God,  
who abide in God's shadow for life,  
**say to your God: "My refuge, my rock in whom I trust!"**

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,  
and famine will bring you no fear:  
**under God's wings your refuge, God's faithfulness your shield.**

**And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,  
bear you on the breath of dawn,  
make you to shine like the sun,  
and hold you in the palm of my hand."**

You need not fear the terror of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day;  
**though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come.**  
For to the angels is given a command to guard you in all your ways;  
**upon their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.**

**And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,  
bear you on the breath of dawn,  
make you to shine like the sun,  
and hold you in the palm of my hand."**

"Because they have set their love upon me I will deliver them,

**I will uphold them because they know my name.**

When they call to me I will answer,

**I will be with them in trouble;**

I will rescue and bring them to honour.

**With long life I will satisfy them,**

**and show them my saving power."**

**And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,  
bear you on the breath of dawn,  
make you to shine like the sun,  
and hold you in the palm of my hand."**

### **Scripture: Luke 4:1-13 The Testing of Jesus**

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.' "

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' "

Then the devil led him to Jerusalem and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and

'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' "

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

*The other readings for this week are: **Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Romans 10:8b-13***

**Meditation:** "Rooted in what?"

**Hymn VU 115** "Jesus, Tempted in the Desert" Words: Herman Stuempfle, 1990.

Music: The Sacred Harp, *Philadelphia*, 1844; harmonized Ronald A. Nelson, 1978.

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Jesus, tempted in the desert, lonely, hungry, filled with dread:  
 “Use your power,” the tempter tells him; “turn these barren rocks to bread!”  
 “Not alone by bread,” he answers, “can the human heart be filled.  
 Only by the Word that calls us is our deepest hunger stilled!”

Jesus, tempted at the temple, high above its ancient wall:  
 “Throw yourself from lofty turret; angels wait to break your fall!”  
 Jesus shuns such empty marvels, feats that fickle crowds request:  
 “God, whose grace protects, preserves us, we must never vainly test.”

Jesus, tempted on the mountain by the lure of vast domain:  
 “Fall before me! Be my servant! Glory, fame, you’re sure to gain!”  
 Jesus sees the dazzling vision, turns his eyes another way:  
 “God alone deserves our homage! God alone will I obey!”

When we face temptation’s power, lonely struggling, filled with dread,  
 Christ, who knew the tempter’s hour, come and be our living bread.  
 By your grace, protect, preserve us lest we fall, your trust betray.  
 You’re above all other voices, be the Word we hear, obey.

### **We Respond To God’s Grace**

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

The Spirit calls us into the wilderness of our world, the slums, the park benches after sundown,  
 beneath the bridges we travel over that we might deliver God’s blessing to all we meet.

**Offertory Hymn VU 537** “Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands” Words: Calvin Weiss Laufer, 1927.  
 Music: Neil Dougall, ca. 1831.  
 Words and Music in the Public Domain

Your work, O God, needs many hands to help you everywhere,  
 and some there are who cannot serve unless our gifts we share.  
 Because we love you and your work, our offering now we make:  
 be pleased to use it as your own, we ask for Jesus’ sake.

#### **Prayer of Dedication**

Holy One, accept and bless these offerings. Use them to feed the refugees, the homeless,  
 and the working poor in our land and around the world. Bless your people, and this land in which we live,  
 a land rich in abundance. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

#### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord’s Prayer**

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 cleared the temple courts, making it a place of God once again. Send your Holy Spirit to  
 sweep through your church, that once again it may be your instrument of holiness and righteousness  
 in the world.

Jesus, you wept over the state of Israel. Be with our cities, our towns, and our villages. This week, we think especially of the people of Ireland, the United Kingdom of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

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 feel forsaken by you. Jesus, you wept over the death of Lazarus. Be with all who grieve:  
 Jesus, you cured the lepers and the lame, restored sight to the blind, and cast out demons from the demon possessed. Be with the ill and dying, those awaiting medical intervention and those recovering from treatment, especially we pray for Christa, David, Jack, Kurt, Mary Lee, ..... and their friends and loved ones and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

Jesus, you offered up prayers with loud cries and tears,  
 Hear our prayers, as we pray the words you taught us, 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 the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
 now and forever. Amen.**

**Hymn VU 633** "Bless Now, O Go, the Journey" Words: Sylvia Dunstan, 1989; © 1991 GIA Publications, Inc.  
 Music: Basil Harwood, 1898; © MCPS Dr. Basil Harwood Royalties c/o Christopher Harwood.  
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Bless now, O God, the journey that all your people make,  
 the path through noise and silence, the way of give and take.  
 The trail is found in desert and winds the mountain round,  
 then leads beside still waters, the road where faith is found.

Bless sojourners and pilgrims who share this winding way,  
 whose hope burns through the terrors, whose love sustains the day.  
 We yearn for holy freedom while often we are bound.  
 Together we are seeking the road where faith is found.

Divine Eternal Lover, you meet us on the road.  
 We wait for lands of promise where milk and honey flow.  
 But waiting not for places, you meet us all around.  
 Our covenant is written on roads, as faith is found.

### **Commissioning**

May the blessing of God

**give us strength for the journey;**

May the Spirit of wisdom

**give us vision for the road;**

May the love of Christ

**make us caring companions;**

As together we go forth in this season of Lent.

**Amen.**

**Response: MV 90** "Don't Be Afraid" Words: John L. Bell and Graham Maule, 1995. Music: John L. Bell, 1995.  
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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.

**Postlude:** "On Eagle's Wings" Words and Music by Michael Joncas, 1979.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The board will meet following worship TODAY to discuss the use of space in the church for a group seeking a safe place to gather.

**Movie Night:** "God and Country", Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at Wesley-Knox United Church, London. The movie seeks to explore the rise of Christian Nationalism, toxic spirituality, and Christofacism in the US and its move north into Canada. FREE

Midweek Lenten Series at Belmont United Church. Light supper at 6:00 p.m. followed by worship at 6:45 p.m. Wednesday March 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

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# "here we are!"

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Let's answer God's Call to be bold. Connected. Evolving. Diverse. Courageous. Filled with hope. And most of all, United— in deep spirituality, bold discipleship, and daring justice.

When God calls us, we must answer as Moses, Samuel, and Mary did: by saying, "**Here I Am!**"

For more information, go to: [www.unitedchurchfoundation.ca/centennialcampaign/](http://www.unitedchurchfoundation.ca/centennialcampaign/)

**LECTIONARY READINGS:**

March 16, 2025 (Second Sunday of Lent)

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35