

**Sunday March 23, 2025**  
**Third Sunday of Lent**

**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** "Great is Thy Faithfulness" Music by William Runyan Arr. Cindy Berry

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

**Hymn VU 223** "Eternal, Unchanging, We Sing" Words: R.B.Y. Scott, 1938, © 1988 Emmanuel College,  
75 Queen's Park Cr. E., Toronto, ON. Used with permission.  
Music: Welsh Folk Song, arr. John Roberts (Henllan) in  
Caniadau y Cyssegr, 1839. In the Public Domain.

Eternal, Unchanging, we sing to your praise:  
your mercies are endless, and righteous your ways;  
your servants proclaim the renown of your name  
who rules over all and is ever the same.

Again we rejoice in the world you have made,  
your mighty creation in beauty arrayed,  
we thank you for life, and we praise you for joy,  
for love and for hope that no power can destroy.

We praise you for Jesus, our Master and Lord,  
the might of his Spirit, the truth of his word,  
his comfort in sorrow, his patience in pain,  
the faith sure and steadfast that Jesus shall reign.

**Lenten Candle Liturgy** written by Jim McKean. **Gathering**, Lent/Easter 2025. Page 70-71. Used with permission.

Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David. *Isaiah 55:3*

Today is the third Sunday of Lent, 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. We continue our theme of the many covenants God has with God's people.

Today we begin with two of the purple candles in our Lenten triad already extinguished. The purple candles signify the royal status that Jesus has within our hearts and our minds. The Christ candle signifies the light of Christ in our world, and it will be the last candle we extinguish on Good Friday. Today we mark the journey by extinguishing the third candle, even as we remember God's covenant of love.

*(third purple candle is extinguished)*

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

Covenant Keeper, your promise of unconditional love has upheld us ever since our birth and baptism. We know ourselves to be your beloved children. Throughout this Lenten journey, continue to make us strong to serve you, as Jesus was strengthened through an outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Grateful for Jesus' dedication to drawing humanity close to you, we draw close to Jesus, joining in and studying his ministry. Amen.

**Ministry of Music:** "In the Garden" Words and Music: C. Austin Miles 1869-1946

Shannon Wakeling

### **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 288** "Great is Thy Faithfulness" Words: Thomas O. Chisholm, 1923, alt. Music: William M. Runyan, 1923.  
Words and Music © 1923, renewal 1951 Hope Publishing Co.  
OneLicense.net A620168 CCLI 11438349

Great is thy faithfulness, God our Creator;  
there is no shadow of turning with thee;  
thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not;  
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see,  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided  
great is thy faithfulness, ever to me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see,  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided  
great is thy faithfulness, ever to me!

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
wondrous the portion thy blessings provide.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see,  
all I have needed thy hand hath provided  
great is thy faithfulness, ever to me!

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

**Responsive Reading: Psalm 63**

**My soul is thirsting for you, O God, my God.**

You are my God, I long for you from early morning.  
My whole being desires you like a dry, worn, waterless land.  
My soul thirsts for you.

**In the sanctuary let me see how mighty are your works;  
your constant love is better than life itself,  
and so I will praise you.**

**My soul is thirsting for you, O God, my God.**

I will give thanks as long as I live;  
I raise my hands in prayer.

**My soul will feast and be filled,  
and I will sing and praise you.**

**My soul is thirsting for you, O God, my God.**

As I lie in bed, I remember you, O God;  
I think of you all night long,  
for you are my constant help.

**In the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.  
I cling to you; your hand keeps me safe.**

**My soul is thirsting for you, O God, my God.**

**Scripture: Luke 13:1-9 Repent or Perish & The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did."

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the man working the vineyard, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

*The other readings for this week are: **Isaiah 55:1-9; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13***

**Meditation:** “Theodicy”

**Hymn MV 79** “Spirit Open My Heart” Words: Ruth Duck, 1994. Music: traditional Irish melody, arr. Arthur G. Clyde, 1997.  
Words © 1996 and Arrangement © 1997 The Pilgrim Press. OneLicense.net A620168

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
Spirit, open my heart.

God, replace my stony heart with a heart that’s kind and tender.  
All my coldness and fear to your grace I now surrender.  
Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
Spirit, open my heart.

Write your love upon my heart as my law, my goal, my story.  
In each thought, word, and deed, may my living bring you glory.  
Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
Spirit, open my heart.

May I weep with those who weep, share the joy of sister, brother.  
In the welcome of Christ, may we welcome one another.  
Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
Spirit, open my heart.

### **We Respond To God’s Grace**

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

God offers all that we need, at no cost, with no strings attached. May we, made in God’s image, do likewise, offering what we have and who we are, with no strings attached. Our tithes and offerings will be received.

**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 all that we offer. Use it to slake the thirst of parched souls, and sate the hunger of empty bellies, heal the broken, provide hope for the despairing, and welcome the stranger as family who has been away for too long. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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

God of all seasons, in your pattern of things there is a time for keeping and a time for losing; a time for building up and a time for pulling down. In this holy season of Lent, as we journey to the cross, help us to discern in our lives what we must lay down and what we must take up; what we must end and what we must begin. Give us grace to lead a disciplined life, in glad faithfulness and with the joy which comes from a closer walk with Christ.

We pray for your church. May it serve the world as Christ served all whom he came into contact with, with unconditional love.

We pray for the world leaders. May they listen for you, and lead all in your way of justice and righteousness.

We pray for the peoples of the nations, especially the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. May you bless them.

We pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones, especially the friends and families of: Christa, Mary Lee Patience, and John Muir. May they wait upon you and find strength and comfort in you.

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

May they find healing and wholeness in you.

We gather all of these prayers together in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, and who taught us to pray:

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Hymn VU 657 "He Leadeth Me"** Words: Joseph Henry Gilmore, 1862. Music: William Batchelder Bradbury, 1864.  
Words and Music in the Public Domain.

He leadeth me: O blessed thought!

O words with heavenly comfort fraught!

Whate'er I do, where'er I be,

Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!

By his own hand he leadeth me!

His faithful follower I would be,

for by his hand he leadeth me!

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,  
 sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,  
 by waters calm, o'er troubled sea,  
 still 'tis his hand that leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!  
 By his own hand he leadeth me!  
 His faithful follower I would be,  
 for by his hand he leadeth me!

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,  
 nor ever murmur nor repine,  
 content, whatever lot I see,  
 since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!  
 By his own hand he leadeth me!  
 His faithful follower I would be,  
 for by his hand he leadeth me!

And when my task on earth is done,  
 when by thy grace the victory's won,  
 even death's cold wave I will not flee,  
 since God through Jordan leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me!  
 By his own hand he leadeth me!  
 His faithful follower I would be,  
 for by his hand he leadeth me!

### **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 Lenten time.

**Amen.**

**Response: MV 90** "Don't Be Afraid" Words: John L. Bell and Graham Maule, 1995. Music: John L. Bell, 1995.  
 Words and Music © 1995, 2007 by WGRG, Iona Community, Scotland,  
 administered by GIA Publications Inc. OneLicense.net A620168

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:** "As The Deer" Words and Music by MARTIN NYSTROM. Arr. by Ken Medema

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 30 to decide on our future direction.

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

Cross Country Check-In with the General Secretary and members of General Council Executive online, on Wednesday, April 2 at 6:00 p.m. EST. Register on CHURCHx.ca

**Wanted:** People to knit or crochet small woolen hearts to be handed out at the Thames Centre Pride event this coming July 6. Rev. Mark has instruction sheets if you are willing and able.

## **LECTIONARY READINGS:**

March 30, 2025 (Fourth Sunday of Lent)

Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**It's Here!**

**Presenting... the *Centennial Legacy Campaign***



As we in The United Church of Canada celebrate our centennial year, God is calling us to create a strong foundation for our next century. The Centennial provides a unique opportunity to unite around a shared goal—honouring our past, celebrating the present and looking to the future.

**But how do we do that? Through the blessing of legacy giving!**

We're inviting ALL communities of faith across the church to join our most ambitious and impactful fundraising initiative ever. The aim is to inspire legacy gifts to support local communities of faith, Mission and Service, and the Foundation. Gifts that will commemorate the past 100 years and help ensure the church's vitality to embrace the next 100!

Joining this campaign means that with our support you can confidently invite the people who love and participate in the life, work and ministry of your congregation, to make a gift that secures its vibrant future.

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/)