

Sunday March 30, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Lent

We Gather In God's Presence

Prelude: "Near The Cross" William H. Diane. Arr. Victor Labenske

Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation

Hymn VU 260 "God Who Give to Life Its Goodness" Words: Walter Farquharson, © 1970 Walter Farquharson.
Music: Cyril Vincent Taylor, 1941; © 1942, renewal 1970 Hope Publishing Co.
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God who give to life its goodness, God creator of all joy,
God who gives to us our freedom, God who blesses tool and toy:
teach us now to laugh and praise you, deep within your praises sing,
till the whole creation dances for the goodness of its King.

God who fills the earth with beauty, God who binds each friend to friend,
God who names us co-creators God who wills that chaos end:
grant us now creative spirits, minds responsive to your mind,
hearts and wills your rule extending all our acts by Love refined.

Lenten Candle Liturgy written by Jim McKean. **Gathering**, Lent/Easter 2025. Page 71. Used with permission.
Today is the fourth 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 three purple candles extinguished. In Jesus' time, purple signified royalty. So it is
fitting that we use purple candles to signify that Jesus has royal status in 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 our fourth candle, even as we remember God's covenant of
grace.

(third purple candle is extinguished)

Opening Prayer *(unison)*

Covenant God, your grace infuses our lives each day. As we extinguish this fourth candle of Lent, may
we be reminded of all the grace-filled times in our lives. May your grace enliven us today, and may we
find grace in all that we offer and do. Amen.

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

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 271 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" vss. 1, 2, 4, 5 Words: Frederick William Faber, 1854.
Music: Johan Ludwig Steiner, 1723.
Words and Music in the Public Domain.

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven,
there is no place where earth's failings
have such gracious judgement given.

Troubled souls, why will you scatter
like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts, why will you wander
from a love so true and deep?

For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

We Open Ourselves to Receive God's Blessings

Responsive Reading: Psalm 32

Be glad in God you righteous. Rejoice, O saints, rejoice.

Blessed are those whose offenses are forgiven,
whose sin has been put away.

**Blessed are those to whom God imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

Be glad in God you righteous. Rejoice, O saints, rejoice.

When I kept silence, my body wasted away,
while I groaned all the day long.

**For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my strength dried up as in a summer drought.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
my guilt I did not hide.

**I said: "I will confess my sins to God";
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

Therefore let all the faithful pray to you in time of trouble;

**when great floodwater rises,
it shall not come near them.**

You are a hiding place for me,
you will preserve me from trouble;

you will surround me with shouts of deliverance.

Be glad in God you righteous. Rejoice, O saints, rejoice.

I will teach you,
and guide you in the way you should go.

I will keep you under my eye and instruct you.

Be not like a horse or mule, without understanding,

whose course must be checked with bit and bridle.

Many pains are in store for the wicked,

but whoever trusts in God,

is surrounded by steadfast love.

Be glad in God you righteous. Rejoice, O saints, rejoice.

Scripture: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But

the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

*The other readings for this week are: **Joshua 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21***

Meditation: "The Prodigal"

Hymn VU 360 "A Woman and a Coin – The Coin Is Lost" Words: © 1991 Jaroslav J. Vajda.
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We Respond To God's Grace

Invitation to Invest in God's Mission

Let us not be grumbling and resentful of the generosity of others, as the older brother in the story was. Rather, let us, with joy and hope, be generous with our gifts, as the father in the story was, that others might be swept up into God's loving and gracious arms. 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

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 covenant people who in turn will bless the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer

Holy One, you are the Prodigal Parent, lavishing forgiveness and grace on each of us according to our individual need. Sometimes that means that we are treated differently from one another, and we, like the older brother, become resentful of what we perceive as preferential treatment. We don't see others as brothers and sisters, but as those who are competing with us for your grace. We are quick to see their shortcomings, and slow to look into our own hardened hearts. Forgive us God. Help us to realize that your grace is boundless; that there is no end of its supply; that there is enough for us, and all of our sisters and brothers in this world. Help us to share that knowledge and extend your grace to those we meet this week, that they may know that they too matter to you.

Prodigal Parent, hear our prayers and lavish your grace upon those for whom we pray:

For the church around the world, we ask new life.

For all who minister we ask grace and wisdom;

For people of other faiths, we ask your diving blessing;

For those who cannot believe, we ask your faithful love;

For governors and rulers in every land, we ask your guidance;

For the peoples of the world, especially the people of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia, that all may strive for justice and live in peace.

For those who live with war, terrorism, and violence, especially the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, Yemen, Israel/Palestine, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

For those who mourn the loss of loved ones, especially the friends and family of Christa, Mary Lee Patience, and John Muir. May they find strength and comfort in you.

For people who are ill or dying, awaiting medical intervention or recovering from treatment, we ask for your healing peace. Especially we pray for Jack, Kurt, and their loved ones and caregivers and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

We lift all these prayers 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 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 112 "O God, How We Have Wandered" Music: Henry T. Smart, 1836. In the Public Domain.
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Commissioning

Go. Pray. Serve. Forgive. Celebrate.

We go – praying, serving, forgiving, and celebrating.

Be persistent in the way of God

Knowing that God's blessing rests upon you.

We go to share God's blessing with those we meet on the way.

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: "The Way of The Cross Leads Home" Charles H. Gabriel. Arr. Victor Labenske

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Congregational Meeting will be held TODAY to discuss and decide on our future direction.

The final Midweek Lenten Series at Belmont United Church is April 2. Light supper at 6:00 p.m. followed by worship at 6:45 p.m.

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.

Correction: The Celebration of Life for Mary Lee Patience will take place on Saturday, July 26 in the Beatty Room at the Thamesford Public Library from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

LECTIONARY READINGS:

April 6, 2025 (Fifth Sunday of Lent)

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8