

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2022 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to the songs. However, our musicians have chosen music to fit the scriptures. We invite you to look up the words in your worship book and ponder them. If you do not have a worship book, ponder the words to one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have internet may find the songs on YouTube.

This year, for the season of Lent, we are following the United Church liturgy focusing on Lenten practices, Called to Be the Church. The services were prepared by United Church Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Richard Bott. The reflection for each Sunday was written by the Rev. Dave Jagger.¹

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

“At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, then they begin to hope it can be done, then they see it can be done – then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago.”

~Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden

BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...

Mary of Bethany recognizes Jesus' mission: he has come to die. Perceiving the new thing God is doing, she embraces his death and pours out her devotion to Jesus in an extravagant act. The prophet beseeches the Israelites to forget the old pattern of salvation—the dry way through the Red Sea. Now God will make a new way, a wet way, in a dry, barren, and death-filled place.

On this Sunday in Lent, salvation lies not behind us but before us, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Mary's action in the face of death is bold. She anoints a corpse, and in so doing honors Jesus' vulnerability and his life. She models love for the other disciples and for us.

By honestly facing the reality of death, we are more fully able to live honoring our own vulnerability and the humanity of others. We live with gratitude. We are more able to love one another and God extravagantly. However, in our culture, mortality is often avoided. The stench of death is removed through chemicals, and deceased bodies are cosmetically enhanced to appear as life-like as possible.

Each day, we the baptized boldly face death, trusting that God has made a new way, a wet way, to travel from death to life. God in Christ has honored human vulnerability by becoming flesh and by laying down his own life. He is the new way through a dry, barren, and death-filled place. Because Christ Jesus has made them his own, the baptized walk wet through the desert places of this life, pouring out the whole of their lives, down to the very last hair, in extravagant love for God and for the people God has formed.

WELCOME

In Jesus' name, welcome! First-time participant or one who's been here many days; child or elder or somewhere in-between; stewards, caretakers, disciples, children of God— neighbours all, loved and loving. Welcome. Welcome in Christ's name!

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

We respectfully acknowledge that the Province of Manitoba includes the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Lyiniwok, the Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene and Dakota Peoples and homeland of the Metis People.

As First Peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards of the land, and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call this land home. As we open our

¹ <https://united-church.ca/worship-liturgical-season/first-sunday-lent>

hearts and minds to the past, we commit ourselves to working in a spirit of truth and reconciliation to make a better future for all.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Each step on Christ's Way, each step of our lives, takes us to new places, new times. Some of those are times to rest—like Jesus did, when he stopped to pray. Some are times to be challenged—as Jesus was, by the woman from Syrophonecia. Some are times to celebrate, even in the face of grief—as Jesus did, when he shared his last meal with his friends.

Whether our bones are dry, our spirits weary, or we are filled with energy, ready to go; this is our time to be together—

listening for the Spirit,

loving one another,

worshipping our God!

Worshipping our God!

CHILDREN'S SONG: *VU 289 Pass It On*

CENTERING PRAYER

Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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.

CHILDREN'S CHAT

Did you know that your nose can smell more than 1 TRILLION different scents?! That is amazing! What is also amazing is that certain scents can help us remember certain people, places or experiences! I was a Highland Dancer for many years. I danced in a lot of competitions and in a lot of concerts. The smell of Scottish shortbread cookies always reminds me of my Highland Dancing friends and the fun times we had.

In our Bible story today, Jesus goes to a party at Mary, Martha and Lazarus' house. Lazarus was the man Jesus brought back to life after he was dead for four days. As a thank you to Jesus, Martha served the meal. Afterwards, Mary took expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.

That may sound like a very strange thing to do to a person, but it wasn't strange when Jesus walked the earth. Mary was so grateful to Jesus for bringing her brother back from the dead that anointing his feet with her expensive perfume was the most loving act she could think of.

The fragrance of the perfume filled the house! I am guessing that for a long time after that party, whenever the people who were at the party smelled perfume, they thought of Mary and Jesus.

Being able to smell is only one of many gifts we have from God. Being able to see with our eyes, feel with our hands, hear with our ears and taste with our mouths – especially Scottish shortbread cookies – are all gifts from a God who loves us.

So, how do you say thank you to God for all that you have? How do you let God know you are grateful for your family, friends, health, intelligence, being able to love people...how do we show our gratitude?

As a Highland Dancer, I would participate in every concert I could because it brought the people so much joy! What is the point of being able to dance, if you never share your gift?!

This week, I would encourage you to think about how thankful you are to God for all you have, and the ways you can show God your gratitude. If you can sing, sing someone a song. Are you good at drawing – draw someone a picture. Maybe you are good at cleaning – helping someone clean their home who isn't able to do it any more would be a most welcomed gift!

Use your imagination! Don't forget to say a prayer of thanks. Share with God how you use the skills and talents God has given you to make the world a better place.

MINUTE FOR MISSION Acting Together for Ukraine

Your support is helping to provide shelter, clean water, food, and medical attention. ACT Alliance member Hungarian Interchurch Aid is working at the Hungary/Ukraine border to provide relief to Ukrainian refugees.

We are stronger together, and what affects one of us affects all of us. These two truths have become even more apparent as the invasion of Ukraine continues to cost precious lives and rapidly create a humanitarian crisis. The United Nations reports that millions of people living in the Ukraine, displaced from their homes, are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Many have lost friends, loved ones, and property; struggle to meet their basic needs; and face an uncertain future.

In the face of this growing crisis, communities of faith around the world are taking action to offer support.

Spanning 127 countries, the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance is the world's largest network of Protestant and Orthodox churches and agencies, including the United Church. Your generosity through Mission & Service has long supported ACT's humanitarian relief and advocacy efforts.

Right now, your ongoing support through Mission & Service as well as special emergency gifts are helping to provide shelter, clean water, food, and medical attention. What's more, the impacts of war in Ukraine are affecting food security for regions that depend on its agricultural production, including in some areas where global partners are responding.

The *New Humanitarian* news site reports that Yemen imports half of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia, 22 percent of corn imported to Spain comes from Ukraine, and Lebanon relies on Ukraine for up to 60 percent of its wheat and has only about a month's worth of reserves.

"Conflict is one of the main reasons that hunger is rising in the world, and Ukraine represents a stark example of how that happens," states Musu Taylor-Lewis, Canadian Foodgrains Bank director of resources and public engagement, in an interview.

United Church Moderator Richard Bott condemned the invasion in a statement released in early March stating that the act of aggression contravenes the Charter of the United Nations (UN) and represents a serious violation of international law. "We call on all parties to immediately cease hostilities and to undertake action to restore peace," he writes, urging the church to hold the people of Ukraine in prayer and "explore whether there is a Ukrainian Catholic church, Ukrainian Orthodox church, or Ukrainian community centre close to you to whom you might write a letter of concern and solidarity or extend solidarity to people of Ukrainian descent in your community."

Thank you for all the ways you express compassion and care and for faithfully supporting Mission & Service. By acting together, we can be there as a worldwide church community when and where it matters most.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, reveal your presence to us this day as we journey this path with your Son. Through all of life's trials and tribulations your Word sustains us for the journey ahead. Send your Spirit upon us that we might listen, discern, and take heart. Be near us this day and may your Word with us stay and dwell with us forevermore. Amen.

READINGS AND PSALM

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

The prophet declares that long ago God performed mighty deeds and delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage through the waters of the sea. Now, God is about to do a new thing, bringing the exiles out of Babylon and through the wilderness in a new Exodus.

¹⁶Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters,

¹⁷who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:

¹⁸Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

¹⁹I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

²⁰The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,

²¹the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Psalm 126

R: Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy. (Ps. 126:5)

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

³The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses of the Negeb. R**

⁵Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves. R**

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

Writing to Christians in Philippi, Paul admits that his heritage and reputation could give him more reason than most people to place confidence in his spiritual pedigree. But the overwhelming grace of God in Jesus calls Paul to a new set of values.

[Paul writes:] ^{4b}If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: John 12:1-8

Judas willfully misinterprets as waste Mary's extravagant act of anointing Jesus' feet with costly perfume. Jesus recognizes that her lavish gift is both an expression of love and an anticipation of his burial.

¹Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

HYMN OF THE DAY: Bringing In The Sheaves

REFLECTION: Who'd Have Think It?

In Lent Week 1, we explored the Lenten practice of saying "No!" It is easier to say "No" to something when you have already said "Yes" to something else. As those who follow Jesus, each of us, constantly, gets to choose "No" or "Yes." Will I do this or will I do that? How will I use the time and resources I have been given? That's a stewardship question.

In Lent Week 2, we looked into being a blessing. We have been blessed in order to be a blessing to others. We looked deeper into THE stewardship question. As people of faith, it's up to each of us to decide how we are going to use everything God has given us.

In Lent Week 3, as we thought about the stewardship of our time, we explored the Lenten practice of worship that is regular and often.

Last week, as we responded to our congregation's invitation to be generous, we contemplated the beginning of Psalm 23 and the Lenten practice of contentment. We compiled an Appreciation Inventory.

Now, it is one week before Palm Sunday, and Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time. It is one week before Holy Week and Jesus' last days before he is handed over to the authorities and crucified. It is one week before the powers of empire and greed seem to win again. It is one week before the beginning of the end; we stand with Isaiah and stare into a memory filled with dead, drowned bodies. What a sight! As far as you can see, nothing but floating bodies and debris. Death reigns in this place.

They don't know it yet, but there are some close followers of Jesus who will know this experience all too soon as they watch their messiah, their teacher and friend, their hope, hang on a cross and die. What might God do in this impossible situation? It's a really good question. It may be the only question that matters. What might God do in this impossible situation?

Thankfully, for us, we know the answer. The prophet Isaiah proclaims the word of the LORD. "I am about to do a new thing", says God. Life! Hope! A future for God's beloved people.

Then there's the disciples. I know we're getting a little ahead in the story, but they can't believe it. They watch as everything they had hoped for unravels around them and they are powerless to do anything. Jesus seems to embrace it: preparing them during his last meal with them; calling them to prayer in the garden; commanding them to love, not fight, when he is taken away. How can this be? Seeing his battered and abused body as he comes out of the Roman garrison and is led to the hill of the skull. Watching as Roman soldiers strip him and nail him to the wooden cross; as he dies a public and shameful death. Some disciples have it together enough to take possession of his body and bury it as best they can. The rest of his followers scatter and cower.

What might God do in this impossible situation? Resurrection! On the third day, an empty tomb. Vindication. Life! Hope! A future for God's beloved people. Which, I think, leaves us asking the question differently, for ourselves, in our present situations. Instead of a question of abandon and surrender (What might God do in this impossible situation? as if the situation is beyond God's help), it becomes a question of faith and hope. What might God do in this impossible situation? I wonder.... Let's find out. Let's watch for it and expect it. For God is surely in this place and time. God is surely about God's mission in our lives and through our lives. What might God do in this impossible situation? Because God will do something. Not often what we expect, granted. But God will do something: something that brings new life; something that transforms and heals and renews; something unexpected and unforeseen.

Who'd have thunk it?

When you ask the question "What might God do in this impossible situation?" you are activating your faith. You are opening yourself to God. You are reaching out and grabbing on to hope, even creating hope for yourself and those around you. Because as long as you can think of one answer, there is hope.

And that is our last Lenten practice: the practice of hope. It's a trickier one, but hang in there; it's worth it.

This week, take that question with you. Wherever you go. Whomever you encounter. Whatever life throws at you. What might God do in this impossible situation?

Maybe turn it into a prayer: "O God, what are you up to in this impossible situation?" Maybe write some creative spiritual fiction. Imagine what God might do and then write the story.

Take that question with you and immerse yourself in it all week. What might God do in this impossible situation? As long as you can think of one answer, there is hope.

Then come back next week ready to share how this Lenten practice worked for you and how it helped (or didn't) open you up to God, as you made space in your life to actively live out the Way of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE MONTH: MV 139 True Faith Needs No Defence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Do a new thing in the church. Free us from patterns that no longer serve the gospel and bring forward leaders who imagine fresh ways of doing ministry. Give us courage in the face of change.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Do a new thing for creation. Reverse the trajectory of climate change and environmental catastrophe. Revive habitats already impaired by human disregard. Amplify the voices of climate scientists and researchers working to chart a new course.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Do a new thing in our world. Break barriers that prevent political enemies from working together for the well-being of all. Make a way for peace and collaboration among the nations. We pray especially for the people of Ukraine and for the people of Russia who are against Putin's war.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Do a new thing for those who suffer. Reveal a path for any who are unemployed or underemployed, for those experiencing homelessness, and for all who struggle with money. Comfort those who grieve and restore those who are sick: Bill and Terry Howie, Marlene Buhler, Evie and Brian Watt, Douglas Pearson, Wendy, Tracy Skoglund, Brooke Alexiuk, Joan, Angèle Harmonic and family.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Do a new thing within us. Direct us into encounters that broaden our understanding of the human experience. Amplify voices that are ignored or devalued. Guide us in reconciliation and right relations with our indigenous sisters and brothers in Canada. Deliver us especially from the scourge of racism.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Do a new thing in our death. Fill us with the knowledge of Christ and the power of his resurrection as we give thanks for all the saints who have attained the prize of their heavenly call.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SENDING SONG: VU 142 Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross

BENEDICTION

Each step on Christ's Way, each step of our lives, takes us to new places, new times. Some of those are times to rest—like Jesus did, when he stopped to pray. Some are times to be challenged—as Jesus was, by the woman from Syrophonecia. Some are times to celebrate, even in the face of grief—as Jesus did, when he shared his last meal with his friends.

With God doing a new thing, and lives renewed, let us go into God's world—listening for the Spirit, loving one another, worshipping our God!

And the peace of Christ, that passes all understanding, rests and remains with us, now and forever.

AMEN!

Copyright © 2016 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS011617.

© 2011 The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial Share Alike Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/byncsa/2.5/ca>.