

# ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2023

Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to many of 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.

*Parts of today's liturgy are taken from **How Long Will We Have To Cry? A Service of Lament for anti-Black Racism** by Alydia Smith.*

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"Seek a relationship when you pray, not answers. You won't always find answers, but you will always find Jesus." — Father Mike Schmitz

## BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...

*On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that "now is the day of salvation." Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.*

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge we gather and worship on Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Holy One, Creator of all that is, seen and unseen, of story and of song, of heartbeat and of tears of bodies, souls, voices and all relations: you are the God of all truth and the way of all reconciliation. Uphold with your love and compassion all who open their lives in the sacred sharing of their stories breathe in us the grace to trust in your loving forgiveness, that we may face our histories with courage; touch us through the holy gift of story that those who speak and those who listen may behold your own redeeming presence; guide us with holy wisdom to enter through the gates of remorse that our feet may walk gently and firmly on the way of justice and healing. Amen.

~From the Anglican Church of Canada

## CALL TO WORSHIP ~ written by Stephen Fearing

**Ashes have been smeared and sins have been confessed...**

We follow our faithful Lord.

**These times, they are troubling. This journey, it is hard...**

We follow our faithful Lord.

**It is God who sustains, not the temptations of this world...**

We follow our faithful Lord.

**In the Lord is our trust, our protection from harm...**

We follow our faithful Lord.

**Come, let us worship the One whom we serve...**

We follow our faithful Lord.

## CHILDREN'S SONG: Standing In The Need Of Prayer

## CENTERING PRAYER

Lord God, today in our worship, we lament anti-Black racism and violence in North America. We pray that the Spirit will reorient us: challenging us to live by grace rather than entitlement; expecting us to be a blessing to the earth. We pray that by acknowledging our brokenness, we will be closer to

becoming a church where the good news is lived out: faith nurtured and hearts comforted, gifts shared for the good of all, resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize, fierce love in the face of violence, human dignity defended, members of a community held and inspired by God. Through our tears, may we witness to your love and grace. 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

Do you ever forget where you put something? Have your parents ever closed the door to the house and then realized they just locked their housekeys in the house? Have you ever used sticky notes stuck to the doorframe to remind you to not forget to take your lunch to school – as you head out the door? Yep, me too. The older I get, the more notes I need to leave for myself!

One thing that I do not forget is that God is always with me. There have been situations in my life that were scary, even dangerous, and the only way I got through was reminding myself that God is with me, that, even if I died, I would be ok because I am God's child.

It is hard sometimes, when we are scared, or alone, to remember that we are never truly alone. God is with us, always willing to listen to our fears. God's Spirit gives us courage.

Perhaps, next to the sticky note to remind you to take your lunch, you have another sticky note beside it that says, "God is with me." That way, you will remember your lunch and remember that you are hugged by God, all day, every day!

#### MINUTE FOR MISSION: Your Belief and Support Make All the Difference

We all need someone who believes in us. Someone who supports our dreams. Here's one story of how your belief and support make all the difference.

In 2017, Arwa was a Palestinian refugee who had just arrived in Montreal. She had made a harrowing journey, travelling from Saudi Arabia through New York City with three children in tow. "It wasn't easy for me. I was a single mom in a new country with new people. I was struggling for housing and looking for a job. It wasn't easy at all," she says.

Arwa sought help at Montreal City Mission, an outreach ministry your Mission & Service gifts support. There, her whole family found a place to belong. Arwa's children made friends, and she benefited from training programs and events.

It wasn't long before Arwa gathered a group of women together to form a catering cooperative called Women Weaving Their Dreams, which specializes in homemade Middle Eastern meals. The group was going strong and the women were becoming more financially secure when COVID-19 struck.

No stranger to hardship, Arwa was determined to help others through the pandemic. She initiated a sewing circle to make masks. In a relatively short period of time, the women of this sewing group made over 2,000 cloth masks for unhoused people and people with low incomes in their community. "I was so happy to help people," says Arwa, whose extraordinary leadership skills landed her a full-time job at Montreal City Mission.

"I consider myself a lucky person that I got to know this organization. It has become not only my full-time job, not only my provider. It has become my home. I hope to see more and more women getting the same chance to have this better life for their families," she says. "I wanted a country that could hold me and hug me my whole life long. I found it in Canada."

Your Mission & Service gifts support people's dreams for a better life—amazing people who make their communities and our country stronger.

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God, source of all light, by your Word, you give light to the soul. Pour out on us the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that our hearts and minds may be opened to know your truth and your way. Amen.

## READINGS AND PSALM

First Reading: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

*Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.*

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; <sup>17</sup>but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

<sup>3:1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup>but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; <sup>5</sup>for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Psalm 32

**R: Mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.** (Ps. 32:10)

<sup>1</sup>Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!

<sup>2</sup>**Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

<sup>3</sup>While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, because of my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>**For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;  
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer. R**

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.

<sup>6</sup>**Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble;  
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**

<sup>7</sup>You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

<sup>8</sup>**"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye. R**

<sup>9</sup>Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding;  
who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you."

<sup>10</sup>**Great are the tribulations of the wicked; but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**

<sup>11</sup>Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; shout for joy, all who are true of heart. **R**

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19

*Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.*

<sup>12</sup>Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—<sup>13</sup>sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. <sup>14</sup>Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

<sup>15</sup>But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much

more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. <sup>16</sup>And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. <sup>17</sup>If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup>Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. <sup>19</sup>For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

*Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.*

<sup>1</sup>Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. <sup>3</sup>The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." <sup>4</sup>But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

<sup>5</sup>Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup>saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

<sup>8</sup>Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; <sup>9</sup>and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

<sup>11</sup>Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

HYMN: VU 114 Forty Days And Forty Nights

SERMON

My friends were having a barbeque. Little Aiden ran out the back door leaving it swinging in the wind.

"Aiden! You left the door open!", called Mark.

"I know!" was the two-year-old's response as he ran past.

Immediately following, Kierra ran out the back door, still leaving it swinging in the wind.

"Kierra! Close the door!"

"But it was already open!"

Needless to say, she too kept running and ultimately it was Mark who had to get up from his chair to close the back door. So, who's fault was it for leaving the door open? Aiden's, or Kierra's, or perhaps both? The fact is, Mark didn't care who did what, he just wanted the door closed.

In the Genesis text for today we are faced with the same question; one that ultimately has been the reason for women being viewed as responsible for the fall of humanity, and ultimately inferior to men, since it was Eve who tempted Adam. But I stress that the whole point of this story is not "who's fault was it?", but rather, what was the RESULT of the action.

One year, on Hallowe'en, several of us dressed up for classes at the seminary. A female friend came as a little red devil -- complete with horns -- and a sign pinned to her back which read, "Your Old Satanic Foe". While it was meant as a joke, what prompted the costume was an actual situation whereby one of the male seminary students took her aside one day to talk to her, only to ask her if she

was from the Devil, because she was a woman in a theological institution. At first she thought he was kidding, but very quickly realized that this fellow was serious. This is a real-life example as to how focusing on "who's fault was it?" can lead to a misunderstanding of the point of scripture and the dangerous living out of the belief that one is ordained by God to be superior to another. It's time we looked at the text as a whole.

Adam has been placed in the garden by God as the steward of the garden. He is to till it and keep it. Eve, his help-mate, his partner, is there with him. The instructions have been given not to eat the fruit of the tree of life or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, evil, in the body of the serpent, has other plans.

Notice that the serpent tempts Eve, not with lies, but with the powerful possibilities of the truth. For the reason the serpent gives for eating the fruit is the same one God cites in verse 22 as the reason why Adam and Eve must be expelled from the garden: they ate, their eyes were opened, and they became like God, knowing good and evil. With this presentation of the truth, Eve looks at the tree again, only this time it looks different. Before it was just the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now she notices that it is good for food, that it is a delight to the eyes, that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.

Notice how the truth is the motive for the temptation. Notice how the truth is the reason why Eve takes the fruit. She takes it, not because she is just in the mood to defy God, but rather she takes and eats the fruit because the desire for knowledge and power, like God's, is sparked in her newly created soul. Eve consciously chooses to disobey God in order to gain knowledge. Adam, on the other hand, passively receives the fruit. He does not chastise Eve, but rather follows her lead blindly, child-like in his obedience. So, who's fault is it? Is it Adam's? Eve's? Both?

"Would someone please close the door!"

The point of the story is not "who's fault is it?", rather, the intended order of life was altered, and God in turn had to adapt to the situation. Not by closing their minds; no God allowed Eve and Adam their knowledge, as well as the consequences of their decision to disobey to attain it. What God did was to open another door. True, it was the door leading out of the garden, but if the relationship with God was going to remain intact, then Eve and Adam had to learn that with knowledge came personal responsibility. One cannot blame God for the consequences of one's actions, especially if they go against what God desires.

Jesus knew this. As hungry as he was after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was so rooted in God as to not be tempted by material fulfillment at the expense of his relationship with God. Eve, on the other hand, saw only the fulfillment of her desire to be like God, rather than the consequence.

Who's fault is it? Yours? Mine? Ours? When we get caught up in this question, nothing gets done, and the coldness of sin blows through the open door of our hearts, turning them against God, and into stone. Perhaps the greatest sin of the Church is that it is forever focusing on who's to blame, rather than moving ahead to discover that the grace of God overcomes all our sin.

Mark did not care who left the door open, he just wanted some action taken to remedy the decision to leave the door open in the first place. Perhaps, rather than blaming others, we should ask ourselves, "What does God desire me to do to help change the outcome?"

When we feed gossip, when someone tells a racist joke and we laugh, when people do not respond as we wish, Jesus' response is the one that provides guidance and comfort: "Worship the Lord your God. Serve God alone." When we live this, we move out of the desire to blame and into the wholeness of living for God and respecting our neighbour. Like Jesus, we then focus on the key relationship in our life, rather than instant gratification or material desire.

We may no longer live in Eden. We do continue to walk with God.  
Amen.

HYMN OF THE MONTH: ELW 715 Christ, Be Our Light

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God, we lament a world where the quality of a child's life can still be accurately predicted by the colour of their skin; Black and Brown skin tones are perceived as weapons; White supremacy goes unchallenged; discrimination is expected and planned for; and racism is known to be woven into the fabric of society.

Lord, what shall we do?

**Listen to my voice.**

God, we remember our children who have inherited racism overtly through the teaching of hate, and covertly through the lived experience of prejudice. We lament that children have the unfair burden to unlearn the lessons of discrimination that they have been taught. We lament that children are fighting against low expectations placed on them by a biased society. And we lament the children who are angry when chastised for reflecting back the hateful language they have been taught.

Lord, what shall we do?

**Listen to my voice.**

God, we remember our parents and guardians who have experienced friends, loved ones, and children dying from the physical and emotional wounds of anti-Black violence and who have worked thanklessly and prophetically for equality. We lament the protectors who feel helplessly unable to shield their loved ones from harm. We lament that our protestors are tired yet still persevere without signs of rest or progress. We lament that there are people who live in fear of hateful violence because of what they look like.

Lord, what shall we do?

**Listen to my voice.**

God, we remember our elders, who created paths where there were none and sacrificed so that other generations could live in peace and freedom. We lament that they are being forced to relive the violence of racism in both different and familiar forms. We lament that they are not able to live with the peace and dignity that they fought for. We lament that they are forced to watch their children suffer. We lament the elders who are tired, weary, and worn, with no signs of rest.

Lord, what shall we do?

**Listen to my voice.**

God, we remember our Canadian ancestors, who despite great opposition and persecution thrived to become role models. We remember Lincoln Alexander, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Viola Davis Desmond, Elijah McCoy, Portia White, Carrie Best, Fergie Arthur Jenkins, Wilbur Howard. We lament the stories that we do not know, the histories that we have failed to share and the names that we have forgotten.

Lord, what shall we do?

**Listen to my voice.**

God, we remember...we lament...and we wait, trusting that you will comfort us, while providing us direction. Amen

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

SENDING SONG: VU 117 Jesus Christ Is Waiting

## BENEDICTION

Although the road is long and the journey is hard. Although the mountains are too high and the valleys are too low. By your grace, give us hope. By your power, give us strength. By your mercy, give us wisdom, so that we may continue to go where you lead us, until all your children are safe from harm. May we go with your light shining in us. Amen.

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