

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
March 28, 2021, Palm Sunday/Release of Pastoral Covenant for
St. Andrew's United Church and the Rev. Catherine Somerville

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time Sunday at 7:00 p.m.

Email sketchingalong4@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Hymn: VU 123 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

1. Hosanna, loud hosanna the happy children sang;
through pillared court and temple the joyful anthem rang;
to Jesus, who had blessed them close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.
2. From Olivet they followed 'mid an exultant crowd,
the victory palm branch waving, and singing clear and loud;
the Lord of earth and heaven rode on in lowly state,
content that little children should on his bidding wait.
3. "Hosanna in the highest!" That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer; earth, let your anthems ring.
O may we ever praise him with heart and life and voice,
and in his humble presence eternally rejoice!

Welcome & Announcements

Welcome to St. Andrew's United Church in Sudbury, Ontario for yet another online worship service. **We are distancing** from one another because we love one another, are caring for one another.

A reference to the Good Friday service. Join us for worship on Good Friday. Please find our shared Good Friday service with St. Mark's, St. Peter's, St. Stephen's on the Hill, Trinity in Lively, and St. Andrew's United Churches on St. Mark's YouTube channel, the coordinates for which you will find at the end of this service.

This is a very meaningful time in our life as a community of faith. After seven years living out God's love and grace for one another and the community with Rev Catherine Somerville, today we release one another – St. Andrew's and Catherine – from the covenant we made. Don't fret though, Catherine has answered the call to another Sudbury United Church, St. Stephen's on the Hill. We will mark this important moment later in this worship.

If you are joining us for the first time today welcome. At the end of the service, there will be information about how to contact us – via email, facebook, and even by phone. As always there is a live Virtual Fellowship time every Sunday, tonight, at 7 p.m. hosted by Bev and Diane. Information on how to join this evening's fellowship time is included at the end of the service.

Thank you so much to all of you who have a role in making it possible for us to worship together online – there are many more than I can name. But a hearty thank you to all of you.

Our leadership team has decided that for the foreseeable future, at least into April, we will continue to record worship and post on our YouTube channel. Hopefully, soon we will begin livestreaming on Sunday mornings. We will let you know in advance when we make that shift.

(Picture of the sanctuary on-screen.) This is what the sanctuary space looks like... We wait, faithfully, until that day when it is safe again to meet, even with distancing measures in place and masks on.

Let us now prepare to worship. Let us breathe. [silence]

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

St. Andrew's United Church takes seriously the commitments made to First Nations communities through the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, especially through the Calls to Action to communities of faith like ours. Therefore, we acknowledge this day that we gather for worship on the traditional territories of the Atikemeksheng Anishnawkbek and the Wahnapiitae First Nations, and the other Indigenous peoples who preceded them – the original nations of this land. We acknowledge, with respect, their history, their spirituality, and their culture.

Inviting Holy Light

(Text not available at time of printing.) ... [light the candle, silence]

Called to Worship (*Catherine Voice 1, Dave Voice 2*)

VOICE 1: There is no power like the power of the people to bring change,
because the power of the people won't stop!

VOICE 2: Say what!?

VOICE 1: There is no power like the power of the people to bring change,
because the power of the people won't stop!

VOICE 2: Which side are you on, friends? Which side?

VOICE 1: Justice for our children is justice for all

ALL: **and we will strive for justice until freedom is won.**

VOICE 2: Which side are you on friends? Which side?

VOICE 1: Justice for our children is justice for all

ALL: **and we will strive for justice until freedom is won.**

VOICE 2: Save us, O God, have mercy and save us.

VOICE 1: Open to us the gates of righteousness.

ALL: **Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest heaven!**

VOICE 2: Hosanna in the highest.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

Our Palm Sunday journey acknowledges two parades, one parading domination, while Jesus gathers crowds seeking love and peace. May we re-member our relationship with you this morning, God. We need a parade these days, God – to let loose, to feel fully human and connected. Breathe into us the life, the colour, the sound and the interconnectedness with you and with our neighbours for which we long. Open our hearts in worship, transform us... This we pray along with the prayer that Jesus taught...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom come, Thy 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 kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer for Grace

We want to be respectful tenants of your beautiful garden, God, marvelling at the beauty and complexity of your creation and our relationship to it.

Forgive us for all the ways that we have hurt your good creation, and guide us as we strive for a healed world.

Forgive us for being nearsighted as we look at our lives, unable to see the bigger picture and greater plan laying ahead for each of us. Remind us who we are, and whose we are.

Forgive us for those times when we have withheld mercy, from others, and from ourselves. Lord, have mercy. Amen.

Assurance

ONE: With Christ's help,

ALL: we will return to the garden.

ONE: Through Christ's passion,

ALL: we will weep by the tree.

ONE: For Christ's sake,

ALL: we will proclaim the good news:

ONE: Nothing can separate us from Jesus Christ, our liberator. Amen.

Hymn: VU 128 *Sanna, sannanina* (sing twice)

Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.

Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.

Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina,

sanna, sanna, sanna.

Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina,

sanna, sanna, sanna.

Scripture Readings

"Another Way" based on Mark 11:1-11, a paraphrase

It was many, many days later that we disciples had any idea about what the procession with Jesus into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration meant. We were so caught up with what Jesus had been telling and teaching us. As we walked that last stretch of our journey to Jerusalem and through the east-facing gate, Jesus seemed frustrated and impatient and more on edge with us, but he was also more focused and definite than we had ever seen him.

And then there was the way the details all fell into place – the donkey, the crowds gathering, people spreading their cloaks and leafy palm branches before him on the road, and the cheering: "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

It was as though it had all been pre-arranged and carefully planned. Yet, we had been with Jesus every day, all day, 24/7! And it all happened at the same time as the Romans processed into Jerusalem through the other gate. We had seen that procession before. That was the usual way for the powerful to enter Jerusalem for the Passover. The Roman rulers wanted to show their power, frighten people, to make sure no one took advantage and used a gathering of so many people try to overthrow the Roman government. Pilate would enter first, on horseback. There would have been many, many soldiers parading in with him, some on horses, some on foot. The sound of their armour and weapons clanging would echo off the walls of the city's buildings, mixing with the sound of hooves and feet marching and throwing clouds of dust into the air.

Our entrance into Jerusalem with Jesus was certainly another way, a different way, a way we had never imagined we'd see or be part of. We entered with enthusiasm and joy, hopeful and fearless. But we didn't understand or even think about how important it was, how we were supporting another way, a different sort of power, and how it would disturb so many people. Despite the cruel Roman ways, most of us were far too afraid to stand up against the Roman rulers; everyone thought that meant fighting and bloodshed and death for us. No one, not any of us disciples, ever imagined another way to face the Romans, a way where one could stand up against them without armour or even a weapon in one's hand, with peace and truth and love in one's heart.

No one, that is, except Jesus.

Prayer of Response

Drawing from the song of Psalm 118, we pray:

This is God's doing, marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that God has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. God, our God, has given us light; with palm branches in hand let us gather, and worship our Maker. Amen.

Message: "Parade or Protest?"

(Not available at time of printing.)

Hymn: VU 120 O Jesus, I Have Promised (verses 1,2,3)

1. O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
remain for ever near me, my Saviour and my friend:
I shall not fear the journey if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway if you will be my guide.
2. O let me feel you near me: the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
but, Jesus, then draw nearer and shield my soul from sin.
3. O let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
now speak, and make me listen, O guardian of my soul.

Minute for Right Relations

The Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

In this week that we call Holy, our thoughts turn to the trial of Jesus. It was an unjust trial. Things could have been done differently, and one of the learning pieces we hold, is that it takes truth and courage to bring about change in the world.

When apartheid finally ended in South Africa and Nelson Mandela became President, vengeance could have reigned. Instead, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created. Jailed for 27 years for wanting blacks to have the same rights and opportunities as whites, Mandela chose a new idea, not a trial, but a Commission – a peaceful process of truth-telling and bridge-building, as a way to seek justice for all, in the long term. Courage to lead in a different way opened the door to healing.

The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission was inspired by South Africa's legacy. In South Africa, the Commission was tasked with exposing and healing wounds sustained over centuries of inequity between the Indigenous black peoples and the settlers who dominated them.

There are obvious parallels with the Canadian TRC mandate: to inform all Canadians about the Indian Residential Schools and their devastating legacy; to guide and inspire a process of reconciliation based on trust and renewed relationships. For over 100 years, Canadian Aboriginal children were taken from their families and sent to residential schools. The government-funded, church-run schools, were established to eliminate parental involvement in the spiritual, cultural and intellectual development of Aboriginal children. More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were forced to attend these schools. The last school closed in the mid-1990s.

The impact of residential schools is a legacy of unresolved trauma passed from generation to generation, manifesting itself in many ways including strained relationships between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians. Although the Apology given by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008 was crucial, the work of healing and reconciliation belongs to us all. Indeed, this goal will take the commitment of multiple generations.

Richard Wagamese, Ojibway author, reminds us that to live at our best, we need truth and courage. When we keep truth in front of us and have the courage to keep moving toward it, our world will live at their best.

Offering Moment

Think about those masses of people who enthusiastically came out to greet Jesus at the gate into Jerusalem. They were making a statement by being there, a courageous one that.

You, and all of us, are here today. A statement made by our decision to not do other Sunday morning things, to worship, to pray and reflect on what God's dream for us is today. If you were a demonstrator to the world this morning, what would your placard say? Maybe **God really loves you!** or, Sylvia and our Reaching Out Team would love this, **Love absolutely every neighbour, no exceptions! ~Jesus**

We are here to grow spiritually, to become the children God created us to be. Thank you for sharing your gifts that you offer with your whole heart, and sometimes at great price. Thank you for your financial gifts to St. Andrew's and its ministries, thank you for your gifts to Mission and Service.

Let us pray: As we offer our hearts and gifts, may we seek the same mind as Christ; remembering as we give those who have so little, thinking of all the ways we can serve humbly, and trusting completely in your love, Tender God. We pray this in the name of the one who called us here, Jesus. Amen.

Hymn: VU 128 Sanna, sannanina (sing twice)

Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.
Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.
Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina,
sanna, sanna, sanna.
Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina,
sanna, sanna, sanna.

Release from Pastoral Covenant

Statement of Purpose

Dave:

Our church, like any community, changes. Babies are born. Children grow up. Loved ones and friends grow old. People move into our community and church. Others leave us, moving on to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities.

Let us not forget that the ministry in this place is Christ's ministry, entrusted to us as part of his Body. Our ministry belongs to Jesus and is ongoing. When a minister comes into our church, we covenant with one another; we promise to walk together as God's people, deepening our commitment to Jesus Christ and growing closer to God. God's covenant with us never changes, but our covenants with one another do change.

We gather now to mark the ending of the covenant between Catherine Somerville, St. Andrew's United Church, and the Canadian Shield Regional Council. Together, let us give thanks and mark this moment of the life we have shared in Christ.

Catherine:

Members and friends of St. Andrew's United Church, I thank you for your love, kindness, and support during these last seven years. Thank you for wisdom offered, care embodied, laughter resounding, curiosity expressed; all have been the markers we have followed along the way.

I am grateful as well, for the struggles, the surprises – and you know, I don't really like surprises all that much, but I am even thankful for them, for mostly surprises are good – and for the opportunities we have shared to experience life in all of its fullness within this community.

I ask you for your forgiveness for the mistakes I have made. Grateful for your help, blessed by the gifts you have given me, thankful for this rich opportunity, let us join in prayer:

Maker-God, Holy One, we give thanks for remembered times when we have shared the life of faith.

We thank you for times of worship, for learning, for prayer and for play.

We thank you for laughter, tears, and service.

I pray for guidance and leading as I move on.

I pray for this incredible community.

Bless the insights we have received from your grace, for healing offered when our hearts grew weary, and for the reminders of your abundant life.

May we each move forward confidently now, with renewed energy and vision. This prayer we make in the healing and loving name of Jesus.

Prayers of Community

Eternal One, after a year of weariness, we lift up to you the reality for many of us, at times we struggle to put one foot in front of the other, if we manage to pull ourselves out of bed in the morning. Yet, you take us by the hand, your Steadfast Love accompanies us through our days and invites us to pay attention to wonder around us – songbirds in the trees, melting ice and snow, warmer days when we can shed our winter coats. Thank you.

After a year of too many stories of those who refuse to be cautious, caring more for self than community, we crane our necks, listening expectantly for stories of hope. Help us to not only listen, but to take heart when we continue to hear or read about people willing to care for a neighbour who needs advocacy, a caring phone call. Thank you.

After a year of varying states of isolation, it is no wonder that there is a baseline of anxiety in our community, our world, in ourselves. Plant in each of us, in our world, a yearning to celebrate that we have survived. You planted in us not original sin, but original blessing, a sense of resiliency in spite of the challenges around us. If only we, like those Israelites of old, can hang onto the faith that you will guide us, Jehovah.

Many special ones, near or far, did not survive. Many are ailing from the fallout of catching COVID. We acknowledge the griefs and losses from this journey and hold them in our prayers, and ask you to embrace all your children, especially those who have died, those who are ill, those who are caregivers, exhausted. Spirit, go with all who hunger, who grieve, who are persecuted or discriminated.

We commend particularly today – Inge and her family, Marion and Doug, Marcel and Rhodine and their families, Bev, Mitch and Connor, Vicky, Dawn, Maggie and her family, for friends in retirement and long-term care facilities.

Bless Rev. Catherine and the St. Andrew's Church community. As we reach this fork in the road, may we all always seek your wisdom, your vision, and feel your grace coaxing us along the path that can be so challenging.

Knowing what lays ahead in Holy Week, a final supper and a cross, remind us that we are extravagantly loved, and we in turn are to lavish family, friends, absolutely every neighbour with your infinite love.

We bring our spiritual palms and wave them as we invite the presence of the Living Christ into our gates now. Come Jesus, Come. Amen.

Presentation to Catherine – Joyce & Jim Dickson

Dave:

Catherine, go now, surrounded by our love, led by the promises of the Living God, the presence of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of the Spirit of Life.

Walk new paths of love and service.

Take with you all that we have shared together in this community.

May these memories be like springs of water to all of us when we are thirsty, rays of light when it feels as if we are in darkness, and reason for rejoicing always.

May God bless you, Catherine. May God bless this community of faith, St. Andrew's United Church.

Hymn: MV 195 *Long Ago and Far Away*

1. Long ago and far away Jesus lived and worked and prayed,
healed the sick and the fearful lonely, lived his life to show us God's way.

Stretched his arms out as he said, "Fill the cup and share the bread.
Remember me in love and joy and blessing."

2. Jesus gathered the children around him, spoke of Love and the joy to be found,
told them stories of wisdom and wonder, God's creation in all that's around.

Stretched his arms out as he said, "Fill the cup and share the bread.
Remember me in love and joy and blessing."

3. Jesus called all his friends to be with him, share the bread and cup once again.
Life, to you I will offer it gladly, love will be with you right to the end.

Stretched his arms out as he said, "Fill the cup and share the bread.
Remember me in love and joy and blessing." *(Repeat)*

Commissioning

Dave:

God sends us along this holy path through despair into the dawn
where we reminded that nothing is impossible for God.

Catherine:

Let us lean into this journey, our hearts filled with compassion,
and with a generosity of spirit that reaches out to every neighbour.

Dave:

Jesus walks with us through the pain of this week;

Catherine:

may we listen for the voices of those who feel lost or forgotten,
and forgive extravagantly, as we would want to be forgiven.

Dave:

The Spirit comforts and strengthens us on this journey.

Catherine:

Spirit, blow us along the bumpy path, steady our steps
as we take the hands of all who may stumble.

Benediction Hymn: VU 375 *Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness, vs. 4*

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow thro' the wilderness, calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

4. You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow thro' the wilderness, calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

Postlude

Prayer for Grace and Assurance from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion* – Lent/Easter 2021, Wood Lake Publishing, Inc.

Prayer of Response adapted from Psalm 118, p 837 in *Voices United: The Hymn and Worship Book of The United Church of Canada*, pp. 740-741. © 1996 The United Church Publishing House.

Mark 11:1-11, a paraphrase from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion* – Lent/Easter 2021, Wood Lake Publishing, Inc.

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Minute for Right Relations adapted from a Minute for Right Relations talk prepared by Rev. Teresa Jones, of the Canadian Shield Regional Council's Right Relations Group.
