

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
March 21, 2022 – Third Sunday of Lent

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, March 13.

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

Prelude

Opening Hymn: MV 135 *Called by Earth and Sky, vv. 3, 4*

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.

This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

3. Precious these mountains, ancient sands; vast fragile land.

Seeds of our waking, rooted and strong, Creation's faithful song.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.

This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

4. Precious the fire that lights our way, bright dawning day.

Fire of passion, sorrows undone, our faith and justice one.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.

This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky, called by earth and sky.

Lighting a Candle in Memory of Patricia San Cartier

Inviting Holy Light

Welcome. You and me, we are on holy ground. Let us breathe in this quiet, moment as Christ's community, on this Lent journey together. With our gifts of solitude and compassion from previous weeks, we stand at the dawn of a new day, wondering what will be gifted us today. Just sit, or stand. Ground ourselves. Breathe deeply. We invite Holy Light to symbolize the sacredness of this moment. *[Dave lights candle]*

Hymn: VU 376 *Spirit of the Living God, vs. 1*

1. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Nurturing Safe Space

Our Creator doesn't just love me, or particularly loves retired folks or millennials. We are all beloved children of God, ALL people regardless of age, ability, cultural background or gender identity. Let us live into reality those words, perhaps we are not there yet, to be truly and radically inclusive, but acknowledging that we are works in progress is a step.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

We as people of faith inherit a legacy, a history of hurt, but also journey into new chapters of healing and reconciliation. Today, here we are worshipping on the ancestral land the Wahnapiatae First Nation and of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, this land where the Robinson Huron Treaty was made in 1850, and never honoured by Canada.

We live, work, play, and pray on the Treaty lands. May we live in harmony and respect with all those who share the earth with us and be thankful to God as we move into a peaceful and healthy future together.

Welcome and Announcements

Hello there. Welcome to St. Andrew's United Church. Again, we give thanks for our musical leaders, Graham and Debby. We also offer a note of gratitude for Suzanne Nykilchyk who will be reading the Scripture this morning. Thank you to our Stewards of the Month for January, Suzanne Nykilchyk, Jen Bruneau, Jill Bruneau, and Alison Warner-Smith. Details were sent in the NEWS this past Thursday.

In worship over Lent, we are on a journey. You have probably seen the signposts and the dirt road at the front – thanks Jill, Jen and Sue. Each week we find gifts in the wilderness – this week we will talk about the gift of patience. In this wilderness world of ours, patience is not always demonstrated on the roads, in our workplaces, in our homes.

Those at home, if you are new here, note that our contact information is at the end of the video, and you might want to visit our website or Facebook page, or email our office manager so you can receive our weekly e-newsletter called the NEWS. We also have a Virtual Fellowship time tonight at 7:00. As always, you can get your Zoom link to join that time of connecting by sending an email to Diane. That email address will be part of the credits after this worship.

Call to Worship

God will surprise us with kindness.

Our lives will be carried beyond the horizons of human mercy and enriched with overflowing love.

Pause, turn around on the Lenten road and see a new reality.

On this road we may find in faith the free gifts of God through Christ.

Then, in celebration, we will refresh the world, with generosity beyond the commonplace.

Thank you, Creator.

Opening Prayer

Invite us to the banquet of new life flowing from your generous heart, O God. Help us to receive the love which is spread across the table of life

and into which we are gathered this day. Call to our hearts in invitation.

Take our hands now, we pray, and lead us toward your gifts and help us to share the gifts extravagantly, especially with our sisters and brothers who are suffering. Amen.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

Again, we are going to pray a slightly different version of the prayer that Jesus taught, the Lord's prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn: MV 176 *Three Things I Promise, vs. 1*

1. Three things I promise, Holy God, in age and youth, in life and death:
to bless your Name, and cling to Christ, and listen for the Spirit's breath.

Prayer for Grace

Dave has a packsack in his hand.

So it's a good idea to take spiritual inventory, what is in our packsack?

A rock from the first Sunday; out in the wilderness it is uncomfortable, but it is quiet. The rock reminds me that quiet, solitude is important.

Then I found a teardrop – remember, Jesus talked about the place where he was going, Jerusalem, and so sad for the people who would soon hurt him. This teardrop reminds me of the gift of care and compassion in the wilderness.

Now, look we go to our third signpost – what is this? It's a tree, not a very healthy-looking tree at all. There was one day a fig tree looking dry and lifeless like this one, people were going to cut it down. Jesus said, "Don't cut it down. Give it some time, care for it. Truly care for it. For this tree is like us when we are not healthy spiritually, but God is like a merciful gardener who will love us into health again.

What does a plant need to grow? (*sun, water, fertile soil*)

Dave moving from signs up on dais to behind the Communion Table

What do WE need as people to help us be healthy, happy, to grow? (*family... love... safety*)

We say at times like this that our Creator gives us all that we need. But sometimes we don't notice the blessings around us, instead grumbling about what we don't have. We want rewards now, instead of waiting. We won't be satisfied for long, will we? We can feel empty...

We like to be comfortable and happy, even when we know deep down that something is wrong and perhaps we can help. Choosing comfort all the time while others are hurting, we can feel empty...

On the other hand, sometimes we beat ourselves up with guilt. Yes, we might have done something wrong, but we forget that we all make mistakes and that Jesus tells us to forgive others, but forgive ourselves too. When we pile guilt on ourselves we can feel empty...

Time for Quiet Reflection

- Who are the faithful gardeners in your community? Name them, celebrate them quietly and prayerfully as gardeners of the most vulnerable, including at times ourselves.
- What needs to be nurtured in you in order to feel refreshed?

Words of Affirmation

God has set a glorious table laden with abundant love and forgiveness. We are created out of love, to receive that love, so that we can live that love fully. (*Dave fills three glasses with water.*) Taste now the peace that lies within grace. Drink to the full all that God offers to us. Let us lift up our hearts in thankfulness. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn: MV 176 Three Things I Promise, vs. 4

Text

4. Enlivened as the Spirit moves to cleanse, awaken, and renew,
I pray that justice, peace, and truth, may seed and grow in all I do.

Scripture Readings (Suzanne Nykilchyk)

Psalm 63:1–8 (VU p. 781)

Refrain: 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.

**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.**

Refrain: My soul is thirsting for you, O God, my God.

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

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

Refrain: 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 hands keep me safe.**

Luke 13:1-9 (New Revised Standard Version)

This story from Luke speaks about God's kin dom vision as being a place where patience and the nurture of community is in abundance. How can we live into this vision?

At that very time there were some present who told him 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 others 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 gardener, '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.'"

Let us pray, God of table and God of open door, thank you for your invitation. You feed the deep places in our spirits and speak the words that evoke turning for the good. Send your Spirit to guide us in turning toward and trusting in you. Amen.

Message:

Message will be posted on the website when it is available.

Questions for Reflection:

- Where might God be calling you to enrich your spiritual life, and express your passion and faith more fully?
- What first baby step can take towards that spiritual call?

Hymn: VU 703 *In the Bulb There is a Flower*

1. In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

2. There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

3. In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

Minute for Mission – “Thank You from M&S”

Love the way God loves. That’s arguably what Jesus’ whole ministry was about, and it’s summarized in his most travelled quote: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37–39)

We want to thank you—our amazing Mission & Service supporters—for showing love for neighbours at home and around the world. Thank you for turning compassion into action.

Since the pandemic struck, you have helped raise over \$500,000 in emergency gifts to support Mission & Service partners. Your generosity helps deliver personal protective equipment, distribute food, install sanitation stations, and support education programs to help prevent and control the spread of the virus.

What’s more, through our Gifts with Vision catalogue, we have provided over 8,360 full vaccinations to those who need them most across the globe. Altogether, that’s over \$750,000 in COVID relief. Amazing!

Thanks to this generosity, our Regional Council area will receive \$240,000 to support Mission & Service partners near you. From coast to coast, our partners are helping record numbers of families in need. Your generosity through Mission & Service is providing shelter to Canadians without a home, serving nutritious meals to families struggling to make ends meet, offering critical pastoral care in hospitals and schools, and extending life-changing education and job training opportunities.

Gifts in abundance, even in what might feel like wilderness times.

Offering Moment

Watered and filled with wonder in the midst of challenging times, we are called to share our resources extravagantly – our treasures and talents. Remember that image of the Ukrainian Army brass quintet playing in the middle of the square, playing “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”?

Helping locally St. Andrew’s to partner with people who help the most vulnerable downtown. Giving to the United Church of Canada’s Mission and Service allows us collectively to reach out to Ukraine and other places needing love and community. Thank you for all you do, and perhaps those of you who are giving here for the first time. Thank you.

Dedication Hymn: MV 191 *What Can I Do?*

What can I do? What can I bring? What can I say? What can I sing?
I’ll sing with joy. I’ll say a prayer. I’ll bring my love. I’ll do my share.

Dedication Prayer

Add to your table of generosity, all that we bring you today, O God. Place our gifts among those whose lives are failing to grow because they wait for justice. Then lead us on toward ever-expanding horizons for growing in the life of Christ. Amen.

Prayers of Community

(Pot(s) of soil - Suzanne and/or Jen will press seeds into the soil after each “petition”, and pour water from the pitcher into the soil at the end.)

Our prayers can become like seeds of new life, planted in faith, fed, and watered by our hands and cherished with the love of the Creator and the Christ. The Holy Spirit, the warm passion for good, will inspire us with fresh intentions: We will tend the life of the creation (*plant a seed*).

We will rely less on the consumer goods around us and share more with those who long for basic necessities (*plant a seed*).

We will honour the insights of the Indigenous people of this land (*plant a seed*).

We will bring love to those whose lives are stunted by discrimination (*plant a seed*).

We will add to the reconciliation and peace of the world (*plant a seed*).

We will receive migrants and refugees with generosity (*plant a seed*).

O God, we pray for the faithfulness to nurture all that lies within our prayers today. Help us to truly receive all that you offer us, so that our lives wave in joyful hope in a world that dies with cynicism and shallow solutions. This we pray in the name of the Christ. Amen.

(Pour water onto the soil. Find a place in the sanctuary or outdoors for these seeds to grow during Lent.)

Closing Hymn: MV 174 Soil of God, You and I, vv. 1, 3

1. Soil of God, you and I, stand ready to bear
seeds of faith nourished by God's tender care.

Growing in everyone for here God is found.

All stand together, we are Holy ground.

3. Soil of God, you and I, now called to rebirth,
joining as partners with all of the earth.

Living in harmony for here God is found.

All stand together, this is Holy ground.

Blessing

The Lenten way stretches out before us: May we depart the sheltering oasis of God's protection our thirst quenched with the waters of God's generous gifts as we rise up refreshed to continue on the way. And Christ's Community says:

Amen.

Blessing Hymn: MV 45 You Are Holy, vv. 1, 3

You are holy, you show us the way. (*sing four times*)

You show us, you show us, you show us the way,

you show us, you show us, you show us the way. (*sing Refrain twice*)

You are justice, you show us the way. (*sing four times*)

You show us, you show us, you show us the way,

you show us, you show us, you show us the way. (*sing Refrain twice*)

Postlude

Call to Worship and Time up Front adapted from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. Lent/Easter. © 2021 Wood Lake Books Inc.

The Prayer Jesus Taught from Ecumenical Version. English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988.

Psalms 63:1-8 from Voices United, p. 781. © The United Church Publishing House.

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