

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
April 3, 2022 – Fifth Sunday of Lent/Communion

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, April 3.

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

Prelude

Hymn: MV 12 *Come Touch Our Hearts* (vv. 1, 3, 4)

1. Come touch our hearts that we may know compassion,
from failing embers build a blazing fire;
love strong enough to overturn injustice; to seek a world more gracious,
come touch and bless our hearts.
3. Come touch our minds and teach us how to reason,
set free our thoughts to wonder and to dream;
help us to open doors of understanding, to welcome truth and wisdom,
come touch and bless our minds.
4. Come touch us in the moments we are fragile,
and in our weakness your great strength reveal;
that we may rise to follow and to serve, steady now our nerve,
come touch and bless our wills.

Inviting Holy Light

We gather again, to experience the holy. The presence of our Creator with us, but also the sacredness of being welcomed within a community of sojourners, each of us, following Jesus, seeking to love fully, to give extravagantly, and to work towards God's dream of a kin-dom where there is peace, broken things mended, and broken relationships reconciled. We invite Holy Light as we open ourselves to transformation. *[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

You and I, we are God's beloved. Sit with that for a moment. In fact, everyone who hears the voice of Christ and comes for whatever reason – healing, needing hope, inspiration, community – regardless of age, ability, race, cultural background, sexual orientation, or gender identity – all are welcome.

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

Welcome again to worship. You are among friends, you and I are accompanied by God's Spirit that greets us as we open our hearts, open our minds, open our lives.

A special thank you today to Gordon Brown, our guest music leader this morning. A special thank you today to Gordon Brown, our guest music leader this morning. Gordon now lives and works in

Toronto but has his roots in Northern Ontario. Gordon brings to our service a wealth of musical scholarship, expertise, and experience, both generally and specifically with respect to church music. The resume he shared with Jill, Leslie, and me was most impressive and left us with no doubt that he would greatly enhance our service by sharing his gifts with us.

I also want to express my gratitude to Eric Maag who is our reader today. He will be collaborating with Debby Laporte and Marilyn Hurst in telling a very special Gospel story dramatically. We will truly be blessed.

We are on the 5th Sunday of our Journey along the path of Lent. Today we are talking about extravagance, about where we put value in our lives. So, you see the Roman coin sign on screen, we wonder: We hear a story about a courageous woman who demonstrated what she valued most, her faith, and she showed it. Our question today: What do you and I value most? How do we show it?

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.

For our online congregation, please gather your Communion elements and type first name only in the comments box for Prayers of the Community.

Call to Worship

We gather in the presence of God, the creator of sand and stars:

We gather, ready to worship.

We gather in the presence of Christ, our guide for setting a table of welcome:

We gather, with open hearts.

We gather in the presence of the Spirit, our inspiration for moving beyond fear:

We gather, en-couraged by the Spirit to be bold.

We gather together in grace:

Ready to worship, open and emboldened.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: O God, you are the giver of wonderful things. You gave us life. You have filled our lives with family and friends. You lavish us with your grace. You have given us this day to add to the many we have shared. And you have given us Jesus. Help us grow in our understanding and appreciation of just how much you love us, and open our hearts that our worship this day might be an act of praise and thanksgiving for all you have done for us. Amen.

Hymn: MV 161 *I Have Called You by Your Name, vs. 1*

1. I have called you by your name, you are mine;

I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.

I will not abandon you; all my promises are true.

You are gifted, called, and chosen; you are mine.

Time up Front

I got thinking what: what has value in our house. How about the satellite remote. Whoever has it, has control over the TV watching. What would it mean, then, if you were the host for a friend and you gave them the remote and said, "You can decide what we watch."

That would be telling them that they are important, by letting them have a say. I think that Mary, by risking her life savings on perfumed lotion to put on Jesus' feet, she is telling Jesus that he is the centre of her attention.

How do you and I show God that our faith is central, that you are listening and ready to follow? Maybe by being kind to others, being generous in sharing. Knowing that sharing what we have is not always easy when we really love that thing that we share, but it tells the other person that we care about them. It is also practice for us, the more we do it, the more easily it gets for us to share. What do you think Jesus would think about us sharing more and more? I think we can guess that he would be sooooo happy.

This is a repeat after me prayer:
We value you, God and Jesus, so we are here.
Help us to show in what we do and say
How much we love God. Amen.

Hymn: MV 161 *I Have Called You by Your Name, vs. 4*

4. I have given you a name, it is mine;
I have given you my Spirit as a sign.
With my wonder in your soul, make my wounded children whole;
go and tell my precious people they are mine.

Scripture Readings (*Eric Maag*)

Psalm 126 (VU p. 850, Refrain 2)

Refrain: We praise the one who gave the growth, with voices full and strong.

When God brought Zion's captives home,
it seemed to us like a dream.

**But then our mouths were full of laughter,
and our tongues uttered shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations:
"God has done great things for them."

**Truly God has done great things for us,
and therefore we rejoice.**

Refrain: We praise the one who gave the growth, with voices full and strong.

Restore our fortunes, O God,
as streams refresh the Negev.

**Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy.**

Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed for sowing,
**shall come home with songs of joy,
bringing in their sheaves.**

Refrain: We praise the one who gave the growth, with voices full and strong.

John 12:1-8 (*Eric Maag, Marilyn Hurst, Debby Laporte*)

This is a paraphrase of a Gospel story taking us with Jesus on a visit with two very special friends in Bethany, close to the end of his journey to Jerusalem.

Narrator: Eric Maag; Dramatic Movement (mime); Martha – Debby Laporte, Mary – Marilyn Hurst

NARRATOR:

Martha placed a spoon in the stew that she had been working on, to check on the flavour of the dish. She tasted it, frowned a bit, and then added a few more herbs. She wanted everything to be

just right for tonight's dinner. It was in honour of Jesus, their beloved friend, who had brought their brother back from beyond the grave. It was so hard to believe – it had all been like a dream!

Martha looked over at Jesus and Lazarus, who were sitting by each other at the table, sharing fresh baked bread. The sight made her smile. As she continued to look around the table at Jesus' followers, she recognized the worry on many of their faces. All of them knew that the authorities were after Jesus following the raising of Lazarus. Martha knew that they all just needed some time together to feel a little less jumpy. She hoped that the evening would provide a respite from the demands, the crowds, the questions, and the fears.

After Martha brought the stew out to the table, her sister Mary appeared, carrying a small jar. Martha knew that Mary wanted to do something special for Jesus and she wondered what her sister was going to do. Mary walked over to Jesus, knelt before him, and loosened her long hair. She opened the jar, which contained a very expensive perfumed ointment. As she gently spread the ointment on Jesus' feet and wiped it with her hair, the room was filled with its sweet aroma.

Martha could tell that she wasn't the only one watching Mary. Everyone had grown quiet and was staring at Mary as she anointed Jesus' feet. Mary was expressing the love that they all felt for Jesus in a very unexpected and extravagant way.

Martha was worried about the reaction others might have to her sister and, as she looked around the table, she caught a scowl on Judas' face.

Suddenly, his voice rang out in anger: "This perfume is worth a year's wages! That money could have been given to the poor!"

Martha looked back at Mary and Jesus, and noticed that although her sister flinched, she kept on anointing Jesus' feet.

Jesus slowly looked over at Judas, and said quietly, "Leave her alone. Mary has done this for me because she understands that I will not be with you much longer."

Martha drew in her breath, repeating Jesus' words in her mind. His words made her wish that there was a secret place that they could bring Jesus to where he would always be safe. As she looked at the expressions around the table, she could see that she wasn't the only one that felt this way.

Let us pray: God of surprising grace, embolden us in ministries that convey care and connection, whether such ministry engages us in actions of long-standing tradition or the newness of taking risks. Remind us yet again, here, that as we do gracious ministry with those around us – like Mary, like Martha did – we minister to you. Amen.

Message: *Value – Sparrows and You*

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

Question for Reflection

- If you had been present that day, what would have been your reaction to Mary's use of a perfume whose cost equated to a year's worth of wages?

Offering Moment

The United Church of Canada, through Mission and Service, does marvellous ministry near and far, collaborating so that the most vulnerable feel God's love – that is thanks to you. Thank you. Now let us come to offer our talents, our skills, and our very being as an offering to do God's work in the world, as we also share in the Gifts given us, the Bread and the Cup.

Dedication Hymn: VU 590 *A Prophet Woman Broke a Jar (vv. 1, 3, 4)*

1. A prophet-woman broke a jar, by Love's divine appointing.
With rare perfume she filled the room, presiding and anointing.

A prophet-woman broke a jar, the sneers of scorn defying.
With rare perfume she filled the room, preparing Christ for dying.

3. Though woman-wisdom, woman-truth, for centuries were hidden,
unsung, unwritten, and unheard, derided and forbidden,
the Spirit's breath, the Spirit's fire, on free and slave descending,
can tumble our dividing walls, our shame and sadness mending.

4. The Spirit knows, the Spirit calls, by Love's divine ordaining,
the friends we need to serve and lead, their powers and gifts unchaining.
The Spirit knows, the Spirit calls, from women, men, and children,
the friends we need, to serve and lead. Rejoice, and make them welcome!

Dedication Prayer

If we want to know you, Generous God, we must see you in those all around us. If we want to serve you, we must give up that which is most important to us, even our material resources, so that blessings of hope and life might be offered to the needy, the lonely, the hungry all around us. Receive our gifts, we pray, so that others might be transformed even as we are. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Sacrament of Communion

As we come to this table, we are reminded that this is the table of Jesus Christ, a banquet prepared for everyone. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith, all who seek wholeness and compassionate paths to peace and justice, are welcome here.

May the God of all new things be with you.

And also with you.

Let us offer our hearts to the One who restores us to new life.

**May we empty them of all that holds us back,
so God may fill the emptiness with grace.**

May our hearts overflow with praise to God.

May joy and laughter resound in our words and lives.

You made a path through the emptiness of chaos,
God of every imagination, sending creation to spring forth as grass
carpeted empty fields, trees stretched their branches to the sun,
animals curled up by cool pools of water.

You shaped us for life with you, so we might share in this beauty and goodness. But we threw aside these gifts, choosing instead our own way, our own needs. Yet, you sent prophets who encouraged us to let go of the past and to return to your side, but we didn't heed their words. You sent Jesus, setting aside your grieving heart to restore things.

With those who long to know you, with those who run to be with you,
we offer our thanksgiving from the depth of our hearts:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God of new things.

All creation honors you with praise and joy.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who comes to take hold of us.

Hosanna in the highest!

Jesus could have clung to his glory, but set it aside to become one of us;
he could have maintained all power, but became weak and foolish for us;

he could have been surrounded by your love, but walked into the forest of our fears, to make a way out for us; he could have avoided pain and suffering, but became frail, one among us, his tears sowing the seeds of hope which brought forth a bouquet of grace.

As we long to want to know Jesus more,
as we seek to be restored to life by you,
we speak of that mystery we call faith:

**Christ lost his life so we might find ours;
Christ was raised, his resurrection life springing forth in us;
Christ will come, that we might gain eternity with God.**

Prayers of Community

At this time, we also remember
all with whom you would have us share your feast.
God of justice, hear our yearning for peace wherever conflict rages;
for truth wherever deception is the norm;
for freedom wherever oppression reigns.

We ask for justice.

God of imagination, hear our passion for new visions
where habits are ingrained and inflexible;
for inspiration where thinking is tedious and stale;
for ingenuity where challenges seem insurmountable.

We ask for imagination.

God of healing, hear our prayers for all those who suffer,
for all those in sickness, for all those who grieve.

We particularly pray for those of concern to us, people and situations near and far that weigh heavily on our hearts. To you we lift our own prayers in silence... *(period of silence)* God,

We ask for healing.

God of generosity, we reflect on our lives, remembering every gift of beauty and mercy you have offered to us.

We offer our gratitude to you.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

We are going to try a slightly different version of the Lord's Prayer, it is very similar, but you might want to read as you pray, and note what is different about it:

Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother, Holy and blessed is your true name. We pray for your reign of peace to come, we pray that your good will be done, let heaven and earth become one. Give us this day the bread we need, give it to those who have none. Let forgiveness flow like a river between us, from each one to each one. Lead us to holy innocence beyond the evil of our days — Come swiftly Mother, Father, come. For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy: Forever your name is All in One. Amen.

On the night that he was betrayed,
he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said:
"This is my body, which is for you. Do this to remember me."
In the same way, he passed the cup after supper saying:
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this whenever you drink it, to remember me."

Anoint this Table and its gifts of the bread and cup
with your Spirit of life and love, we pray,
offered to your children whom you love, near and far.

When we take the bread [Dave breaks Bread]
which has been broken and eat of it,
we forget about our past and embrace your kin dom
where we share in the sufferings of our sisters and brothers everywhere.

When we drink from the cup, [Dave pours Cup]
the fragrance of your grace fills us
to go and serve your people:
the poor who do not always need to be,
the lonely who can be offered a family,
the grieving who can be cradled in love.

When we gather one day in the “New Jerusalem”
with our sisters and brothers of every time and place,
we will join our hands around your feat and sing your praises.
God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

Let us eat and drink together for our strengthening in the faith,
and for the sake of the world. Join in the banquet, for all is ready.

The bread broken, [Dave and all take bread]
and the cup poured, [Dave and all drink]

Prayer After Communion

We thank you, God, for breaking into our world
and pouring into our lives and our experiences.
We thank you, God, for this meal of thanksgiving
and the stories of love, grace, and hope that it tells. Amen.

Closing Hymn: MV 106 *I am the Dream, vv. 1 & 3*

1. I am the dream and you the dreamer. I am the song and you are the rhyme.
You are the tune sung in ev'ry silence. You are the now in the endless stream of time.
3. You are the word and I the echo. You are the leader and I am the led.
You are the joy and I the laughter. You are the Rock on which I lay my head.

Blessing

Sisters and brothers: go forth into a world that is beloved by God.

We bless world with our compassion.

We renew the world with our hope.

With every step we take may we feel anew:

the peace of Christ;

the promise of the Spirit;

and the presence of God. Amen.

Blessing Hymn: VU 481 *Sent Forth by God's Blessing, vs. 1*

1. Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended, O now be extended
the fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of Christ's teaching, receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all.
God's grace did invite us, God's love shall unite us
to work for the kingdom and answer its call.

Postlude

Psalm 126 from *Voices United: The Hymn and Worship Book of The United Church of Canada*. © 1996 The United Church Publishing House.

John 12:1-8 from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. Lent/Easter. © 2021 Wood Lake Books Inc.

Dedication Prayer and **Communion liturgy** written by Thom M. Shuman. © March 30, 2019, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com

The Prayer Jesus Taught written by Parker J. Palmer, in the book *Peace Prayers*. Ed's Carrie Leadingham, Joann E. Moschella, and Hilary M. Vartanian.

Thank you to: Gordon Brown for his musical leadership; Eric Maag, Marilyn Hurst, and Debby Laporte for reading the scriptures; Colin and Betty Clark for preparing the Communion elements; Suzanne Nykilchyk for her assistance with liturgy preparation; Jen Bruneau for assisting with graphics for the PowerPoint presentation; and Mallon Appianing and Roger Pile in the sound booth.
