

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
Sunday, February 26, 2023 – First Sunday of Lent

Welcome to Worship

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

Email smiletoday9@proton.me to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: MV 79 *Spirit, Open My Heart*

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

1. God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

2. Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

3. May I weep with those who weep,
share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ,
may we welcome one another.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open my heart.

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to everyone on this first Sunday of Lent. 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 Facebook page, YouTube channel, or website, or email our office manager so you can receive our weekly e-newsletter. We also have a Social Hour on Zoom, every Sunday night at 7. As always, you can get your Zoom link to join that time of connecting by sending an email to Diane. That email address is also at the end of the video and is on our main YouTube page.

Inviting Holy Light

Today we take the first step on our Lenten journey, travelling in the shadow of our teacher, hoping to follow faithfully in his way.

We keep our senses attuned, attentive to God's Child, the beloved. Even when what we experience makes us uncomfortable or afraid, we do not turn away.

Sung Response: MV 82 *Bathe Me in Your Light, vs. 1*

1. Bathe me in your light, O God of All, Creator;
let it shine upon my soul with healing and with grace.

Be to me a beacon bright through shadows of life's wounding,
showing me the way to live in faith, in your embrace.

Nurturing Safe Space

Each and every one of us is welcome here, on this holy ground. Whatever our age, skin colour, sexual identity, all of us are beloved children of God, and we are welcome. Come as you are. We are invited into authenticity, agents of God's light and love. All of us, members of an inclusive body. Let us worship God together. Let us open our eyes, ears, hearts, and minds to the divine's loving presence among us.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

We gather today on this sacred soil of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikemeksheng Anishnabek, where the Robinson Huron Treaty was made in 1850. We give thanks for the people who, for thousands of years, have lived on this land, honouring the Creator and living in harmony with creation. We acknowledge their stewardship and relationship with the land, its plants and animals, and the lakes and streams with their life forms throughout the ages.

Call to Worship

Listen!

There is hope to be found here.

Listen!

God calls you by name here.

Listen!

There is love that abides here.

This world is full of chatter, so may we do our best to listen.

God is speaking.

Let us worship.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

We pay attention to what is behind us... and we notice God's presence. We pay attention to what is beside us... and we know that God is here. We notice what is before us... and realize that the path is unclear, but we know Christ's promise. No matter who we are, no matter where we come from, no matter where we are going... the kingdom of God is near! So, we gather to worship, taught by Christ, moved by the Spirit, and loved by God. We pray now the traditional version of the prayer that Jesus taught...

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: MV 90 *Don't Be Afraid*

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger
and I have promised, promised to be always near.

N'ayez pas peur, mon amour est plus fort,
il est plus fort que votre peur.

N'ayez pas peur, mon amour est plus fort;
je vous ai promis, promis d'être toujours là.

Prayer for Grace

If any among us are needing forgiveness for something, or growth in our spiritual life, seeking to be real, or yearning to feel God's unconditional love – in other words, God's Grace – this moment is for us. This moment of Grace is a chance to admit to ourselves and to God that we do not have it all figured out. In our uncertainty and worry that we have somehow fallen short, we are surrounded by God's loving Grace.

So, with hearts open to being forgiven and for forgiving others, we ponder:

Do we look to the version of God that makes us feel good, like tuning into a TV station or flipping through social media? This world is so full of clutter that our minds are swarming with background noise – commercials, emails, 24-hour news, notifications pinging in our pockets.

Do we gravitate to the loudest or most astounding voices, rather than the still small voice that might be God's?

Take a moment to ponder the times that we are distracted.

God, open us to your grace as we think of all the times when we get caught up in the world's noises, and forgetting what your voice sounds like. Quiet our minds, Creator. Open, quiet, seeking your love. Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Friends, here is some good news: Even when we tune God out, even when we pay attention to the sensational, the absurd, the loudest voices; even when we do all the talking and don't listen... we are held in the Creator's love and forgiveness. We must forgive ourselves, forgive others. Remember the biblical words from Paul: Nothing could ever separate us from God's love.

So, with joy in our hearts, please repeat after me:

I am loved! I am loved!

I am held in grace! I am held in grace!

I belong to God. I belong to God.

Hymn: MV 90 *Don't Be Afraid*

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger
and I have promised, promised to be always near.

N'ayez pas peur, mon amour est plus fort,
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N'ayez pas peur, mon amour est plus fort;
je vous ai promis, promis d'être toujours là.

Scripture Readings

Let us pray: Holy God, listening is always easier said than done. We shuffle into this space and try to quiet our minds, but the list of distractions is long. We need your help to listen. So today we ask, God, marinate us in your Word. Dust the cobwebs from our ears. Stir our souls awake. Crack open our hearts to make room for you. Scoop us up. Put us in your pocket, and carry us with you wherever you go. We want to hear you, really hear you, so speak to us now. With hope we pray, Amen.

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 – Common English Bible (Suzanne Nykilchyk)

The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. The Lord God commanded the human, "Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!"

The snake was the most intelligent of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say that you shouldn’t eat from any tree in the garden?”

The woman said to the snake, “We may eat the fruit of the garden’s trees but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Don’t eat from it, and don’t touch it, or you will die.’”

The snake said to the woman, “You won’t die! God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves.

Matthew 4:1-11 – New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 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.’ ”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.’ ”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Let us pray: We venture forward with tentative steps into your wilderness. As we step forward, make our steps curious and bold. Grant us eyes to see new things, and hearts to feel new feelings. May this venturing forward reward us with adventure as we follow Christ. Amen.

Message: “Who Will You Listen To?”

The Message will be posted on the website when it becomes available.

Poem: *Who will you listen to?* by Rev. Sarah A. Speed

Twitter or the BBC / the ads on late-night television / the wind as she blows / the echo of children playing / the quiet of snow / the ice bucket challenge / the phone when it rings / your pastor / your mother / your doctor / your gut / the tension in your shoulders / the restaurant singing happy birthday / audio books / TED talks / the rhythm of the music / the coffee drip in the morning / your therapist / the wisdom of the enneagram / the way your heart comes alive when you’re being creative / the man on the corner asking for change / the kid on the subway selling chocolate / the labels on the makeup bottle that promise timeless beauty / the magazines that tell you you need timeless beauty / astrology / the Dow Jones / the hiss of the radiator / the pitter patter of little feet / financial advisors / the top 40 pop / the top 40 country / the New York Times / the rumor mill / the Book of Psalms / your sense of self / Jesus, when he says, “I am with you, always.”

Moment for Reflection

Ponder your stone for a moment. Hold it in your hand. Stone stands as a metaphor for many things.

1. Stones can be used for harm – throwing stones, when we build walls between one another or between ourselves and God.
2. But, imagine, for a moment, if a stone was on your seat before you came here. You sit on it. You jump up. It is annoying, but it gets your attention. A stone is a catalyst for change, movement.

The image you see on the screen is a depiction of the famous fairy tale, the Princess and the Pea, told by Hans Christian Anderson, this piece of art by Edmund Dulac. You may remember the story: A prince looking for his princess, but having no luck. A strange young woman arrives at the door, drenched by rain, and the Queen decides to test her sensitivity by having her sleep on 20 mattresses, underneath which was a tiny pea. Well in the morning, the woman was exhausted, she couldn't sleep because of a lump under her mattress. Eureka – the new princess!

Do you need to be jolted, motivated to change in some way in your life? How?

Choir Anthem: *Now Let Us All Praise God and Sing*

Words and music: Gordon Young

Minute for Mission

Adele Halliday's Work Fighting Racism at Home and Abroad

When was the first time you became aware of discrimination or oppression?

Adele Halliday, the United Church's Anti-Racism Equity Lead, says that parts of her work focus on racial discrimination—and she encounters many people across the church who are surprised by the ongoing systemic racism in church and society.

"I grew up as a racialized person and in a multiracial context, so this always surprises me. There's almost a kind of initial moment of realization," she says. "In my work, what I encourage people to do is move beyond that moment of realization, asking, 'So what does that mean for you in your life? If you're a person who's benefited from racism, now what? What's your next action? What does it mean for your life in the church and society as a person, as an individual, as a family member?'"

Racialized people are among the people who have felt the negative effects of racism. It can take many forms, but all are harmful. And even worse, racism still exists in Canada and in the United Church today.

Your gifts to Mission & Service support educational initiatives, programs, and partners that work hard to dismantle racism. One of these programs is the 40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism, which tackles topics like internalized racism, systemic racism, and anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism.

While the program was designed for The United Church of Canada, Halliday says the impact is global. "I have gotten messages from people in other denominations and in other parts of the world like the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States who are excited about the program and who want to use it," she says. "There are people who are hurting because of racial injustice and racial trauma," says Halliday. "The work that we're doing helps us move collectively towards healing as a church and beyond."

Let us pray: In a world where we have, in the past, enslaved and dehumanized others, we go to treat each person with dignity and respect.

In a world where profit is valued more than human life, we go to proclaim the priceless worth of each person. In a world where the ugliness of racism and White supremacy is found, we go to show that love conquers all social ills.

May we hear these powerful biblical words: Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour everyone; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Offering Moment

Thank you for sharing both your talents and treasures. Your donations will help 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!!

Dedication Hymn: MV 85 Take, O Take Me as I Am

Take, O take me as I am;
summon out what I shall be;
set your seal upon my heart
and live in me.

Oh! Prends-moi tel que je suis;
fais-moi vivre que pour toi.
Viens, mets ton sceau sur mon coeur;
viens vivre en moi.

Dedication Prayer

Take these gifts we offer, loving God, and use them for your work. Take our very selves – our hopes, our dreams, our plans, our wonderings – and use them, too, to make your world a better place. We pray in Christ's name. Amen

Prayers of Community

Leaves (or stones, question of how people would write on it) left on peoples' seats – words on it: "When I am in the wilderness I think of..."

You probably noticed a lump (in case of stones) – or a paper leaf – on your seat when you sat down. How would you finish that sentence, "When I am in the wilderness, I think of..."? Write it on your leaf/stone.

Prayer is not always spoken. Not at all. I want you to quietly, prayerfully consider whether any of these questions resonate with you:

- Are you in the wilderness now, wanting to be rescued?
- Do you believe the community, nation, or humanity is in the wilderness and needs transformation?
- Are there people who are sick, hurting, or grieving?

As I offer this brief prayer, I invite you to consider whether you would like to keep your leaf/stone, or if you would like to bring it forward. You can bring it forward if you wish during this prayer.

Let us pray: Loving God, as Jesus went to the wilderness to be alone with you, when we find ourselves in wilderness, in desert, in lonely and seemingly destitute places in our lives, call to us, so that we might follow your voice out of the distractions, the noises, the din. Help us to find you in all the places of our lives: in places of joy and hope, and in places of despair and heartache; in times of wonder and imagining, and in times of anxiety and fear.

God, we turn our hearts and minds outward to our families, our community, our world. We know that there is great pain, great suffering, great loss, great injustice in our world. Some of that suffering is in our families or in our neighbourhood. Perhaps we notice this week suffering elsewhere in our community or world. We offer up to you now those prayers from the depths and brokenness of our hearts... (*silence*)

Help us know that, wherever we are, and whatever is going on in our lives, you hear us and you respond to us – and above all that, you love and care for us, and for all of your Creation. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 115 *Jesus, Tempted in the Desert*

1. Jesus, tempted in the desert,
lonely, hungry, filled with dread:
“Use your power,” the tempter tells him,
“turn these barren rocks to bread!”
“Not alone by bread,” he answers,
“can the human heart be filled.
Only by the Word that call us
Is our deepest hunger stilled.”
2. Jesus, tempted at the temple,
high above its ancient wall:
“Throw yourself from lofty turret,
angels wait to break your fall!”
Jesus shuns such empty marvels,
feats that fickle crowds request:
“God, whose grace protects, preserves us,
we must never vainly test!”
3. Jesus, tempted on the mountain
by the lure of vast domain:
“Fall before me! Be my servant!
Glory, fame, you’re sure to gain!”
Jesus sees the dazzling vision,
turns his eyes another way:
“God alone deserves our homage!
God alone will I obey!”

Blessing

The wilderness can be a lonely place where we go alone, but the Spirit leads Christ there. It is the Spirit that sends us out into this world to love and serve. Go with the faith that you are held in grace and surrounded by love. Amen.

Blessing Hymn: MV 81 *Love Us into Fullness*

1. Love us into fullness,
touch us with your grace;
Jesus, in your mercy,
draw us to your face.
2. Love us into fullness,
hold us in your care,
cheer us with your presence
here and everywhere.
3. Love us into fullness,
and we will be strong;
Jesus, walk beside us,
fill our hearts with song.

Postlude

Call to Worship and poem “Who Will I Listen To?” written by Rev. Sarah A. Speed, © 2023 A Sanctified Art, sanctifiedart.org

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