

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
April 2, 2023 – Palm & Passion Sunday

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.

Greeters pass out palm fronds as people arrive.

Prelude

Opening Hymn: VU 122 *All Glory, Laud and Honour*

All glory, laud and honour to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

1. You are the King of Israel, and David's royal son,
now in the Lord's name coming, our King and blessed one.

All glory, laud and honour to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

2. The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went;
our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present.

All glory, laud and honour to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

3. To you, before your passion, they sang their hymns of praise;
to you, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

All glory, laud and honour to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

4. Their praises you accepted; accept the prayers we bring,
great author of all goodness, O good and gracious king.

All glory, laud and honour to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to everyone, in person and online. Together in Spirit. This is Palm and Passion Sunday.

Maundy Thursday service – April 6, 7:00 pm – in the sanctuary and on Zoom. The Zoom link is in the News that was sent on Thursday.

Good Friday – 10:30 am – St. Stephen's on the Hill United Church at 1248 Lauzon Avenue, a combined effort of St. Stephens's OTH, St. Peter's, St. Mark's, St. Andrew's United Churches.

Hopefully you received a palm frond at the door. Today is a day that begins with celebration, but the mood most definitely changes as we enter into Holy Week. Palms, the symbol of celebration. But it might not have been a spontaneous parade, because there was another party going on elsewhere in Jerusalem at the same time, a party, a parade where aggressive power was on display. Two parades today, and we ask ourselves – “Who will we follow?” “Which parade will we join?”

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

Jesus, I want to walk with you. Circle me with truth and loving. Come and share in my tears and laughter. Help me to be just and courageous. I want to walk in Your light. [candle is lit]

Sung Response: MV 82 *Bathe Me in Your Light, vs. 3*

3. Bathe me in your grace,
O One of Spirit's longing;
teach me of your gentle ways
that fill the soul with strength.
Guide me on the pilgrimage
that leads to truth and wholeness,
fill me with your promise of
a love that knows no length.

Nurturing Safe Space

In Psalm 139 the singer proclaims: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." That was not someone bragging, it was a faithful person celebrating the wonder and love that our Creator is planted in Creation, particularly here humans.

How about repeating after me: I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Look at someone around you and say to them: You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

In our diversity is the mystery and beauty and holiness of God. May we celebrate the uniqueness, the quirks, the differences we each bring: Age, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Neurodivergence (that is, we think differently). That diversity reflects the mystery of a Creator whose wisdom is beyond anything we can imagine. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. Amen.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

We sing of the Creator, who made humans to live and move and have their being in God. In and with God, we can direct our lives toward right relationship with each other and with God. We can discover our place as one strand in the web of life. We acknowledge that our sacred space is found on the Indigenous territories of the Atikemekshing Anishnawbek and Wahnipitae First Nation. With thankfulness and respect for their stewardship of creation, we seek to live into right relations with all.

Invitation

It is only one week, but this week is a wilderness of emotion and heartbreak. Everything that could happen, happens: celebration, betrayal, feasts, and love made real, hearts are broken, and faith questioned. It all happens here in this one week.

Call to Worship

Give thanks! God's love is constant and devoted to us.

Let us say over and over: God's hope is unfailing in caring for us.

Give thanks, O give thanks! Justice is the gate God opens to all.

Let us say over and over: God hears the cries of those who are forgotten.

Give thanks, O give thanks, people of God! God comes to bring us new life.

Let us say this over and over: God takes the stone tossed aside by us to build the foundation of salvation.

Opening Prayer

When we are weary and feel like we cannot walk, Steadfast Love, you take us by the hand and guide us. When we would rather stuff our ears with cotton than listen to one more whine, one more argument, Word of hope for all, you teach us how to listen to the hearts which are ignored. When we long to run away from the worries, the fears, the insults flung in our faces, Prince of Peace, we thank you for your gift, your modelling for us, a willingness to care in the face of injustice and indifference. Beckon us to the parade not of war and aggression, but to the parade of

the ordinary, those like us who yearn for God's realm of peace where all, absolutely everyone is welcome to the holy party. We pray this along with 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, forever and ever. 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.

Time up Front – Tell the Story – Palm Parade

So, this is a story of two parades. King Herod was powerful and mean. He was always surrounded by soldiers and swords. King Herod needed to look powerful, and he forced people to watch his parade and pretend to love him. So, in this city called Jerusalem, King Herod and his parade was coming in one gate... And at the same time...

There was another parade going on. On Palm Sunday we wave palm fronds, these are leaves from palm trees that grow in hot places, but we in cold places think about Jerusalem, a hot place at this time of year. At the same time that evil King Herod was coming into Jerusalem through a gate, you see there is a giant wall all around Jerusalem, so you enter through one of a number of gates. Jesus had a parade, riding a donkey, he came in while people cheered for him and waving palm branches and throwing their cloaks like a red carpet. This parade might have not just been a celebration of Jesus, but also, maybe making fun of the powerful King Herod and the Roman Empire that were so cruel to all the people in the land. Jesus was coming to Jerusalem for Passover – a Jewish festival – and he would soon be arrested to killed.

Jesus' parade didn't have swords gleaming armour like King Herod's parade, it was just regular people and all they had were palm leaves. This was a parade of peace, while Herod's was a parade of mean bullies.

Which parade would you like to be part of? The parade with the self centred, bully King Herod, or the parade of peace with Jesus? Remember, if you choose the Jesus parade, it is risky. Herod and his soldiers with swords don't like knowing that people love someone else other than him. Are you willing to take that risk?

Ok, let's parade with our palms, but watch out for Herod's soldiers. They might be hiding, lurking, but don't be afraid. God is with you, and cheer loudly because we are powerful as a group!

But before we parade, let us pray. This is a repeat-after-me prayer:

Loving God,... Be with us as we journey... Be with us as we parade for peace... Be with us as we journey... into the tough times;... Jesus knowing he will be arrested,... let down by his friends, and dying... Remind us that we are not alone... Remind us that your Love... is more powerful than the biggest bully... God, you are awesome... Thank you. Amen... Now... let's have a parade!

Hymn: VU 128 Sanna, Sannanina (repeat until Palm Parade ends)

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 Reading (Marilyn Hurst)

As we prepare to listen to Holy Story, for God's Word, let us pray:

Holy God, sometimes it's hard to hear you over the hosannas. Sometimes it's hard to hear you over the noise of city streets. Sometimes it's hard to hear you over our racing thoughts, our mental to-do lists, or our desire to fit in. Sometimes it is hard to hear you in this noisy world. So just as you stopped traffic in Jerusalem, stop traffic here. Pause the rush. Open the gates. Dwell among us, until your Word is all we can hear. We are listening, and laying down our cloaks. Amen.

"Coming into Jerusalem" – A paraphrase based on Matthew 21:1-11

It was a special day in Jerusalem. Once a year, the Roman governor would come to town with lots of pomp and ceremony. There would be a big parade, and people would shout and wave. It's not that they necessarily wanted to do that, but they knew they were supposed to do that. The Roman governor wanted to know that people were happy to see him, even though most of the people – if you asked them – would tell you they were not happy to see him. The Romans had conquered this land and ruled it in a mean way. They told people to look out only for themselves and not care a lot for others. They didn't care about the poorest people, disabled or unemployed, women who had no husbands, and children who had no parents. No, the Romans pretty much only cared about themselves. People didn't like the governor, but they knew they should wave and shout and let the governor think that they liked him. It was always a good idea to stay on his good side. But this particular day, hardly anyone was there to welcome the governor when he rode into town. He had soldiers with him, chariots, and many important-looking people, but only a few people were there to wave and shout.

Most people were on the other side of Jerusalem, where someone else was riding into town on the very same day. Unlike the Roman emperor, this person didn't have horses and chariots – he was riding on a donkey! And he didn't have soldiers and important-looking people with him; he had children and poor people! This was Jesus, and the people were so excited to see him that they flocked to the streets and shouted happy things. They took branches off the trees to wave because they wanted to wave something and celebrate that Jesus was there. Unlike the Romans, Jesus told them how they should love one another and care for one another. Jesus reminded the people that God loved them; because of that, they should love each other. If someone was in need, you shouldn't turn away from them, Jesus taught. You should offer them whatever you can and let them know that God loves them.

How excited the people were that Jesus was coming into town! They weren't quite sure what would happen next, but they were excited because what Jesus taught made a lot more sense than what the Romans said.

Back on the other side of town, though, the Roman governor was not happy. "I wonder who's stealing my thunder?" he muttered to some people with him. "We must find out. And we must do something about it."

Prayer After Scripture (read by Bev Chapman)

where are you headed? A Poem by Rev. Sarah Speed

We are trains on a track, moving through life at warp speed.
Please keep all arms and legs inside the moving vehicle at all times.
The years pass like a flipbook, faster than we can absorb,
but the train does not stop.

We press our faces to the windows to try and get a good view
and we ask each other, where are you headed?

And there on the train we decide— we want to head toward the promised day.

We want to head toward crowded tables and long, healthy lives.
We want to move in the direction of joyful children,
and hopeful communities.
We want to move closer to God with every mile of track,
and that does not happen by accident.
So it's time to ask, where are you headed, and who's driving that train?

Message: "Which Parade to Choose?"

I'll begin with the words of the artist of the provocative artwork for this Palm and Passion Sunday. It is entitled "Power Play" by artist, the Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity. She says this:

In their book, *The Last Week*, theologians Marcus Borg and John Crossman assert that there were actually two parades occurring simultaneously in Jerusalem on this day. From the east, Jesus entered on a donkey. From the west, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, entered with an imperial guard.

They write: "Jesus' procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate's proclaimed the power of empire. The two processions embody the central conflict of the week that led to Jesus' crucifixion." This image is a meditation on these opposing processions and the embodiment of power.

Pilate processes with a pompous display of armor, accompanied by soldiers. For him, power is displayed by superiority, elitism, and weaponry. Later in the week, he will use his power to satisfy the crowds willing Jesus to be crucified, despite not finding any offense to justify it (read John 18 & 19). He uses his power for violence, to appease the status quo.

Jesus enters the city on a donkey with her young colt in tow. He wears no armour, only soft linens. In this image, I imagine if the composition were expanded, Jesus would be kneeling, humbling himself before his disciples as he washes their feet.

In Jesus' processional, members of the crowd lay down their coats as a display of humility and honor. This foreshadows the way Jesus will take off his outer robe and tie a towel around his waist to wash his friends' feet. Jesus embodies power through a posture of vulnerability, through caring for those who desperately need love.

Which parade you would join in Jerusalem has a lot to say about your definition of power. If you are quick to place yourself in Jesus' parade, I encourage you to pause and consider these questions honestly: When have you aligned yourself with systems or people who have used their power for violence or to uphold the status quo? When have you embodied power through vulnerability and love for your neighbor?

The full Message will be posted on the website once it is available.

Choir Anthem: Hosanna, Alleluia

Composers: Richard Avery & Donald Marsh, arr. by Walter Ehret. © 1967 Hope Publishing Co.

Offering Moment

Dedication Hymn: VU 539 God of All Good, vs. 1

1. God of all good, our gifts we bring to you,
use them your holy purpose to fulfil;
tokens of love and pledges brought anew
that our whole life is offered to your will.

Dedication Prayer

Holy God, you come to us in Jesus, a poor man, riding a donkey; we thank you for this witness of the power of love, despite the powers of this world. We thank you for all who have withstood evil, who have suffered the jeers and worse of the crowds, who have been tormented, even put to death, and still refused to use the weapons of hatred.

We thank you for the times we have been able to let go our defenses, give up control, and live with open hands and hearts. We thank you with “hosannas!”, with joy in our hearts, in the name of Jesus, our leader. Amen.

Prayers of Community

We thank you, compassionate God, that you hear the prayers of our hearts:
all who rejoice at a baby’s new birth;
all who mourn when the circle is incomplete, when a friend or loved one has died;
all who are grateful when their work meets with success;
all who suffer because no work is to be found;
all who are bored, not having enough to do;
all who are tired, having too much to do;
all who are surrounded by the love of family and friends;
all who are lonely.

Thank you for hearing us in every situation of life. Help us to support one another always: rejoicing with those who rejoice; and weeping with those who weep.

God, we hold all of Creation before you in our hearts. We lift up the celebrations of life and love with you in silence. We also hold up the situations of concern to us – those who, we know, suffer. Those who are tired and feel forgotten or abandoned. Those who languish because of systems that favour those with power and resources. Let us offer our prayers in this silent moment (silence)...

We want to be joined together as members of the body of Christ, loving one another and serving the world. Like Jesus, we want to respond to each human being who crosses our path with sensitivity and compassion. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Passion: Between Two Gardens, based on John 18:1-19:42 (Marilyn Hurst)

The cross is moved to immediately in front of the congregation. Items are moved from the Communion table, covering the antependia (the hangings on lectern and pulpit) in black. Only the Christ Candle remains.

The day started in silence. Jesus took the disciples to a garden he knew, a quiet place where they could sit and pray and wait for what was about to happen. Judas knew the garden, too, and he came there with the soldiers, carrying lanterns and torches and weapons like they were going into battle.

Jesus spoke. “Who are you looking for?”

“Jesus of Nazareth.”

“I am he. So, if you are looking just for me, let my disciples go free.”

Peter took out a sword and went after one of the people with the soldiers. But Jesus said, “Put your sword away. It is time for me to drink the cup that God has given me.”

The soldiers took Jesus to the high priest, and Peter and the disciples followed him, waiting outside the gate.

Someone asked Peter, “Are you one of Jesus’ disciples?”

But Peter quickly answered, “I am not,” and drew nearer to the charcoal fire the police had built outside the gate. For some reason, he felt very cold.

A police officer asked Peter again if he was Jesus’ disciple, and again he answered, “I am not.”

Finally, a slave asked, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with Jesus this very night?”

For the third time, Peter said, “No.” And a rooster crowed.

They took Jesus to see Pilate, who asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "Are you the one asking this? Or did others tell you about me?"

Pilate said, "I'm not a Jew! But your fellow Jews handed you over to me. What have you done wrong?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

"So, you are a king?"

"You say I am the king. But I say that I testify to the truth, and everybody who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Pilate said to the crowd, "You have a custom that I can release a prisoner this time of year. Shall I release this King of the Jews?"

But the crowd said, "No! Release Barabbas, the bandit."

Pilate did not let Jesus go free. Instead, the soldiers dressed him up in a ridiculous costume, a purple robe and a crown made of thorns, making fun of him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" while they hit him in the face.

Pilate went out to the crowds, who cried, "Crucify him!"

Pilate said, "Crucify him yourselves; I find no case against him. He is your king!"

But the crowds said, "We have no king but the emperor. Crucify him!"

The Christ Candle is blown out and the cross is draped.

So, they crucified Jesus on a hill under a sign which read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Closing Hymn: VU 137 *The Love that Clothes Itself in Light*, vv. 1,2,5

1. The Love that clothes itself in light,
stands naked now, despised, betrayed,
receiving blows to face and head
from hands that Love itself has made.
2. The Love that lifts the stars and sun,
collapses, spent, beneath the cross;
the Love that fills the universe,
goes on to death and total loss.
5. Though Love is lost, Love finds us here;
though Love is absent, Love remains;
where Love is finished, Love begins;
where Love is dead, Love lives and reigns!

Blessing Prayer

O God, in Jesus Christ you entered Jerusalem in joy, beginning a week of pain and sorrow. In these days of defeat and victory, you have brought together humiliation and exaltation, death and resurrection. Be with us now, as we follow in joy and in sorrow, the way of the cross, in the footsteps of Jesus.

The Love of God, the Peace of the constant Christ, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit journey with us all as we go from here. Amen.

Blessing Hymn: MV 12 *Come Touch Our Hearts*, vv. 1, 2, 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.

2. Come touch our souls that we may know and love you,
your quiet presence all our fears dispel;
create a space for spirit to grow in us,
let life and beauty fill us,
come touch and bless our souls.

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.

We leave the sanctuary in silence.

Call to Worship and **Opening Prayer** © Thom M. Shuman, lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com, Liturgy of the Palms, April 10, 2022.

Inviting Holy Light from *The Holy Light*, page 8. Wild Goose Publications, ionabooks.com.

Acknowledgment of Traditional Territory written by Ruthanne McLagan, from *Gathering*, Lent/Easter, Year A, 2023. *from *A Song of Faith*, The United Church of Canada, 2006.

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Prayer of Illumination from *A Sanctified Arts: Seeking Words for Worship*, page 17. © 2023 A Sanctified Art, sanctifiedart.org.

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Thank you to: Rev. Dave Le Grand for leading worship; Gordon Brown and Ralph McIntosh for their musical leadership; Marilyn Hurst for reading the scripture; Bev Chapman for reading the Prayer After Scripture poem; Suzanne Nykilchyk for assisting with liturgy preparation; Jen Bruneau for assisting with graphics for the PowerPoint presentation; Myfawny McIntosh for arranging the Sunday readers; Jen Bruneau, Maureen McGuinness, and Suzanne Nykilchyk for the sanctuary décor; and Eric and Torrin Maag in the audiovisual booth.
