

March 19 – Lent 2 Care and Compassion

Gathering and Preparation

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Check In: What is your favourite “Easter Treat.”

Gathering Music: Song of Praise Preview

Acknowledgement of the Land and Commitment to Reconciliation:

Ahniin, We acknowledge that the land on which St. Paul’s United Church is located is the traditional land of the Wendat and Anishinaabe First Nations.

Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous People from across Turtle Island, including the Metis and our neighbours on Christian Island, Beausoleil First Nation. We are grateful to have the opportunity to worship and work on this land.

This week, we honour the life of Morgan Beatrice Harris, of Long Plain First Nation in Manitoba, and hold her family gently in their grief. We give thanks to those responsible for bringing her home, especially those who fought for a search of the Prairie Green Landfill, and those who are conducting that search in order to bring justice and peace.

We commit ourselves to walking in a new way together: a path of healing and hope. Chi-Meegwetch

Call to Worship

Today, God comes, to gather us in worship:

to wait in silence for the Word, to seek the strength of the Spirit.

Tomorrow, the Word of God comes, calling us to go forth to serve:

to bring hope to those who have none,

to love all tossed aside by indifference.

The next day, and the next day, the Holy Spirit will come:

so we might discover the gift of peace,

and offer it to our broken world.

So, let us worship in this space that God is creating,
where all are embraced.

Together we become beloved community.

Song of Praise: VU#651 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

Opening Prayer Reader: Debbie Just

God of the hungry times,
God of the difficult times,
God of all the times of our lives,
we need to talk.
Sometimes it's difficult to understand
the direction we need to go.
With all the choices we have in our lives,
sometimes we're not sure
when to say "Yes," or when to say "No."
So we ask for your guidance.
We ask for wisdom.
We ask for Spirit.
In our worship, in our work,
in our choices, in our lives.
May it be so, loving God!
Amen.

—a prayer from Called to Be the Church: Congregational Giving Program, 2020 Loving Our Neighbours

Lighting of Christ Candle

Prayer:

As we light this Christ Candle,
may it remind us that Christ is in us and in our world.

Sung Response

Gather us in, ground us in you.
Gather us in, ground us in you.
Gather us in, gather us in,
Ground us, ground us in you.

Peace of Christ

Listening

Theme Conversation: Understanding Others

Children's Song: Like a Rock

The Story: Luke 13:1-9, 31-35 Reader: Terry McPherson

13 At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³ No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. ⁴ 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 other people living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did."

⁶ 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. ⁷ So he said to the man working the vineyard, '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?' ⁸ He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.' "

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

Song for Reflection: "Beneath the Shadow" (Anthem by Choir)

Sermon: Made in the Image of God

Responding

Offering of Thanksgiving

To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name.

- Thomas Merton

Offertory Music: VU#310 "God, Who Touches Earth with Beauty" (seated)

Offertory Response VU#537 "Your Work, O God"

Your work, O God, needs many hands
to help you everywhere,
and some there are who cannot serve
unless our gifts we share.
Because we love you and your work,
our offering now we make:
be pleased to use it as your own,
we ask for Jesus' sake.

Celebrations and Concerns

Prayers of the People Reader: Debbie Just

Loving God,
we thank you for the journey of our lives,
and with its moments of joy and celebration.
Today, we are especially thankful for the celebrations shared among us today.
In the quiet of this place, in a moment of silence
we offer you our own celebrations. ...

As we give thanks for the joy in our life, we also give to you the challenges we face
We remember especially the people and concerns
that have been recorded on our prayer list.
In the quiet of this place, in a moment of silence
we offer you the prayers of our hearts. ...

We remember the story of our ancestor in Faith Abraham
Long before the change of name,
before the first signs of new life showed the beginnings of promises fulfilled,
You asked Abram to make his home among foreigners,
and share the blessing that was to come.

And now, O God, you ask the same faith of us:
The faith to count ourselves among the least,
to find our place alongside the poor and broken;
The faith to trust in your mercy and your promises,
and to share what we have received;
The faith to wait expectantly for your reign of justice and equity,
together with those who most need its gifts.

Teach us to be children of Abram, sharers of the blessings we enjoy:
The blessing of plenty shared with those who have need,
The blessing of healing shared with those who are sick and wounded,
The blessing of joy shared with those who celebrate
and of tears shared with those who grieve,
The blessing of friendship shared with those who are excluded,
and of solidarity with those who fight injustice,
The blessing of peace shared with those in conflict,
and of confrontation shared with those who bring harm;
And in some small way, may our faith and our sharing,
help to bring your promises into being in our world. Amen.

*adapted from a prayer written by John van de Laar and posted on **Sacredise**.*

We pray to the one who loves us as a mother, who is Our Father
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom 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 kingdom and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Going Forth

Song for the Journey: VU#733 "Hymn of Promise"
(In the Bulb There is a Flower)

Extinguishing of the Candles

Blessing

Closing: May The Christ Who Walks on Wounded Feet

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet walk with you on the road.
May the Christ who serves with wounded hands stretch out your hands to serve.
May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart open your hearts to love;
when you leave this place may you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,
and may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you.

Postlude

Beyond Sunday: Seeing

Legacy media, the entertainment industry, and social media have demonstrated their impact on our attitudes and beliefs. If we see disinformation enough times we might just start to believe it. If we hear too much about a disaster we might develop “compassion fatigue.” If we don’t hear about something we might assume everything is just fine.

In this environment it can be easy to dehumanize other people. Or stop listening to their distress. Or just assume what we know is the truth, rather than acknowledging we might have a gap in our understanding.

Our faith calls us to see things in a different way. There is a biblical saying that we need to be in the world not of the world. For me, this means that I will insist on weeping for others. I will work to keep my heart open. I will stay curious and ready to change and learn.

“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?”

Isaiah 58:6-7