**Covenant**

***The United Church of Canada***

a safe place for all people to worship

Minister: Laura Hutchison

**COVENANT UNITED CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025**

**SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT**

 

*(Ring the chime once)*

**WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

You are welcome here at Covenant United Church, where the ordinary is sanctified, where humanity is celebrated in all of its diversity, and compassion is expected. In this place together, we make it a holy place where love can dwell.

 A special THANK YOU to our coffee hour volunteers each month. If you are willing to volunteer for next month, please contact Heather.

 Office hours are Wednesday from 9:00 until 3:30.

 WOW – Women on Wednesday will be meeting at Casey’s on March 19th at 11:45 am.

**LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE**

The light of Christ is a beacon of promise and hope.

**The light of Christ points us toward peace and justice.**

*(the candles are lit)*

*(Ringing the chime)*

**GATHERING HYMN – VU # 108 Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xh4IoSRcyLM>

Throughout these Lenten days and nights

we turn to walk the inward way,

where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,

we live in hope till Easter Day.

The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,

who found in weakness greater power,

embraces us, though lost and flawed,

and leads us to his Rising Hour.

We bear the silence, cross and pain

of human burdens, human strife,

while sisters, brothers help sustain

our courage till the Feast of Life.

And though the road is hard and steep,

the Spirit ever calls us on through

Calvary’s dying, dark and deep,

until we see the coming Dawn.

So let us choose the path of One

who wore, for us, the crown of thorn,

and slept in death that we might wake

to life on Resurrection Morn!

Rejoice, O sons and daughters! Sing

and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!

For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings

on Easter Day will rise again!

**CALL TO WORSHIP --** *poem written in 1966, by Madeleine L’Engle.*

It is my Lent to break my Lent,

To eat when I would fast,

To know when slender strength is spent,

Take shelter from the blast

When I would run with wind and rain,

To sleep when I would watch.

It is my Lent to smile at pain

But not ignore its touch.

It is my Lent to listen well

When I would be alone,

To talk when I would rather dwell

In silence, turn from none

Who call on me, to try to see

That what is truly meant

Is not my choice. If Christ’s I’d be

It’s thus I’ll keep my Lent.

**LENTON PRAYER OF APROACH AND CONFESSION** – *(Christine Jerrett)*

God draws us into God’s presence at the broken places of our lives. There, Jesus offers us healing love and staggering grace to become a new creation in him. Let us open ourselves to the Spirit’s searching truth and healing mercy.

Let us pray:

**It is a wonder beyond wonders, Holy One,**

**That you yearn and wait for us,**

**That you search for us when we are lost,**

**That you rush out to greet us with open arms**

**And a heart full of mercy when we turn toward home.**

You know us, O God.

**You know that we are a strange mixture of faithfulness and failure,**

**Of certainty and doubt, of trust and fear.**

**You know the distant places to which our failures and doubts and fears take us – places of the heart that are far from you.**

God of heaven and earth, your son Jesus invites us to live in the truth that we belong to you, the future belongs to you, and all the earth belongs to you.

As in our baptism you cleansed us and made us new, so today, we ask you to cleanse us:

**Heal our faithlessness and help us start anew so that we may enter into the joy you have prepared for all your children, through your son Jesus, whose claim upon us brings us home into your presence. Amen.**

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God takes what we offer and fills our emptiness with Christ’s redeeming power.

Thanks be to God for this good news! Let us live in the peace of Christ.

**HYMN – MV # 131 You, Creator God, Have Searched Me**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfH76wYKXJQ>

You, Creator God, have searched me and you know my ways. You perfectly understand me. It’s my cause of praise.

I cannot escape your presence in air, land or sea.

Your arms of love and protection are always with me.

**You know me, O God, you have made me.**

**I am proud I’m the work of your hand.**

**In my waking and sleeping moments,**

**with my being I will praise your name.**

You created light and darkness and you love them both.

You blessed the womb of my mother, you brought me to birth.

In your image and your likeness wonderfully made.

I will lift my voice to praise you, you are God indeed. **(R)**

**MINUTE FOR MISSION**

Women for Change works to improve conditions in rural communities by empowering women and girls.****

In areas where historically there has been little rain, now there are floods, and where there were floods, now there are droughts. That’s how Shadrick Chembe, the Monitoring and Evaluation Manager at Women for Change—an organization in Zambia that strives to improve conditions in rural communities by empowering women and girls—describes the changing climate in Zambia. Women bear the brunt.

“In Zambia, women are still responsible for collecting firewood and charcoal and making food. Now, because of climate change, they have to walk a longer distance to gather firewood. Charcoal is harder to get. That means it’s harder to make food. At the same time, women aren’t involved in the decision-making processes that impact this work,” explains Chembe.

Women for Change was established in 1992, and its long-standing partnership with the United Church stretches back to1995. From the beginning, mobilizing communities to share ideas and best practices has been key to the work. Since its inception, 1,500 community groups have been established, with 25‒40 people in each group and representatives from each forming associations. The groups discuss a variety of justice-related topics. Building climate resiliency by preparing for, recovering from, and adapting to drastically changing weather patterns is a priority.

Weather extremes due to climate change coupled with companies promoting seeds that only produce a single crop increasingly put people at risk.

“The majority of farmers are poor. They can’t buy seeds, but companies have created seeds that force farmers to have to purchase them each year,” says Chembe. “Groups discuss how they can save and share seeds, what they can plant with longer or shorter rains, and if there are traditional methods that can increase food production,” he says, adding, “We are grateful for the United Church’s support. The church has really been there for many years, helping us build awareness and resiliency. It’s been a real partnership.”

Your gifts through Mission and Service support long-term, life-changing work through committed partners like Women for Change. Thank you.

**CENTERING**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Genesis 15:1-12; 17-18** – NRSV(UE) – God’s Covenant with Abram

**Luke 13: 31-35** – NRSV(UE) – The Lament over Jerusalem

**RESPONSE TO THE SCRIPTURES – MV #90 Don’t Be Afraid** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDscgGY4X40>

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.

**REFLECTION**

**HYMN – VU #703 In the Bulb There Is a Flower**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWqhsyaFCCk>

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.

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.

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.

**OFFERING INVITATION**

**LENTEN DOXOLOGY** <https://www.google.com/search?q=doxology+piano+music&sca_esv=0d7d1c00198975e0&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA944CA945&sxsrf=AHTn8zpLD9svIaD30mreCHhVv2ZkMYZhkA%3A1741142532148&ei=BLrHZ67aCMeo5NoP4OLioQE&ved=0ahUKEwiu7Iax9fGLAxVHFFkFHWCxOBQQ4dUDCBA&uact=5&oq=doxology+piano+music&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiFGRveG9sb2d5IHBpYW5vIG11c2ljMgUQABiABDIGEAAYFhgeMgYQABgWGB4yBhAAGBYYHjIGEAAYFhgeMgYQABgWGB4yBhAAGBYYHjILEAAYgAQYhgMYigUyCxAAGIAEGIYDGIoFMgsQABiABBiGAxiKBUi4UFAAWOhLcAB4AJABAJgBpgGgAYMSqgEENS4xNbgBA8gBAPgBAZgCFKAC_RLCAgoQIxiABBgnGIoFwgILEC4YgAQYkQIYigXCAgsQABiABBiRAhiKBcICChAAGIAEGEMYigXCAg4QABiABBixAxiDARiKBcICBBAjGCfCAg4QABiABBiRAhixAxiKBcICDRAAGIAEGLEDGEMYigXCAggQABiABBixA8ICBRAuGIAEmAMAkgcEMi4xOKAHrX4&sclient=gws-wiz-serp#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:bb80d6e9,vid:mUco1i7fEns,st:0>

Praise God throughout these forty days

Praise Christ our Lord whom God did raise

And praise the Spirit who imparts

God’s love in Christ into our hearts.

**OFFERING PRAYER**

**We offer ourselves, O God, just as Jesus offered himself. We offer these gifts that you might bless them for your purposes in this world.**

**May they, and we be transformed for justice, for kindness, and for humble love, fostering relationships that make a difference in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** *(please sing in the language(s) of your choice)*

**RESPONSE**: **MV #85 Take, O Take Me as I Am**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gsMaxbJwr8>

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 cœur; viens vivre en moi.

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**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, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

**HYMN – MV # 18 Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary** <https://www.google.com/search?q=mv+18+lord+prepare+me+to+be+a+sanctuary&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA944CA945&oq=mv+18+Lord%2C+prepare+me&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqBwgBECEYoAEyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigATIHCAMQIRigATIHCAQQIRiPAjIHCAUQIRiPAtIBCjExODg3ajFqMTWoAgiwAgE&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:590ae969,vid:48WpmdUUZxY,st:0>

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,

pure and holy tried and true;

with thanksgiving, I’ll be a living

sanctuary for you.

**COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING**

Knowing that you are loved,

Go with a full and thankful heart.

Have hope for what is ahead.

Your God is within you.

God’s great love leads you.

Christ’s great compassion compels you.

The Spirit’s song uplifts you,

This day and forevermore.

May it be so!

**EXTINGUISH THE CHRIST CANDLE**

**SENDING SONG –** **VU # 643 Be Thou My Vision** *(verses 1,2)*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CaxiK-VJxw>

Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart;

naught be all else to me save that thou art,

thou my best thought, by day or by night,

waking or sleeping thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife;

I ever with thee, and thou in my life;

thou loving parent, thy child may I be,

thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.