**Covenant**

***The United Church of Canada***

a safe place for all people to worship

Minister: Laura Hutchison

**COVENANT UNITED CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 2025**

**THIRD 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. April’s coffee with hot-cross buns is hosted by Heather Laverdiere & Veronica Renken on Palm Sunday. If you are willing to volunteer for next month, please contact Heather.

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

  Upcoming Easter Services…..mark your calendar. Palm Sunday Service – April 13th, with communion at 10:30 am. Maundy Thursday – April 17th at 5 pm with a pot luck supper and communion, in the auditorium. Good Friday – April 18th at 10:30 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)*

*(Ring the chime)*

**GATHERING HYMN – VU # 108 Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights** [(verses 1, 4 & 5) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xh4IoSRcyLM](%28verses%201%2C%204%20%26%205%29%20https%3A//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.

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!

**CALL TO WORSHIP --** *Mary Anderson, Glen Abbey U.C., Oakville, Ont.*

Welcome to worship.

However you enter into worship today, come! Come whether you are troubled, grieving, or anxious about health, family, or finances, or whether you are celebrating, excited, and happy.

May the peace of God, who surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds during this time of worship. May you know God’s Spirit with you as we sing and pray.

**PRAYERS OF APROACH** – *David Ewart, Canadian Memorial U.C., Vancouver, B.C. an adaptation of the prayer that Jesus taught*

Holy One, Holy Three

in whom we are one,

fill our world with your wonder.

**May the loving right relations**

**that you eternally embody**

**be how we are here on earth.**

May all living beings receive from their labour

everything that is needed for the well-being of all.

**Forgive us the harm our ideas and actions do,**

**even as we receive healing from the wounds**

**caused by stories, laws, and commerce.**

Save us from trials that overwhelm,

and let us not be tricked into believing lies.

**For the power and the glory**

**of the kinship of all living things**

**abide in you, now and forever.**

May it be so.

**PRAYERS OF CONFESSION --** *Sandy Ferguson, Strathearn U.C., Edmonton, Alta.*

**Loving God, as people of faith, we confess that we have not always followed in your path. We declare that we have hope and faith in you but, at times, our hearts are touched with despair. We are called to share your gift of love but, at times, we have hoarded your gifts for our own benefit. Loving God, we pray that as you journey with us, you will set us on your path. Free us from the power of the distractions, biases, and prejudice of this world that separate us from you. Amen.**

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Members of the Body of Christ, once more we have shared in the mystery of grace. We are freed from this world’s limitations. Our hearts have been opened to God’s presence, and we are reminded once again that we are God’s beloved children. Now we are called to share God’s blessings with others. Amen.

**HYMN – VU # 509 Here I Am, Lord**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_1E_T-29EI>

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.

All who dwell in deepest sin my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.

Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

**Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?**

**I have heard you calling in the night.**

**I will go, Lord, if you lead me.**

**I will hold your people in my heart.**

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people’s pain,

I have wept for love of them, they turn away.

I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.

I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send? **(R)**

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame,

I will set a feast for them; my hand will save.

Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied.

I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send? **(R)**

**MINUTE FOR MISSION**

Springtime of the Spirit – Spring reminds us of renewal, of hope, of life returning.



First come the tiny snowdrops, bravely peeking out over the melting snow. Then, the crocuses with their delicate purple petals, followed by the buttery-yellow daffodils. By the time I’m bundling up for Easter service, tulips in every colour of Joseph’s splendid coat are blooming.

Spring reminds us of renewal, of hope, of life returning. And in this Easter season, I see that same renewal in the Mission and Service work that your generosity makes possible.

Because of you, Mission and Service partners are like the first flowers of spring—blooming where they are needed most. Your compassion takes root and becomes warmth and care for those in crisis, hope for those facing hardship, and new possibilities for communities near and far.

Like the crocuses and tulips, our shared ministry blossoms in many forms, responding to the needs of different communities in the ways that will help most. Your support makes this possible, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

This Easter, may you be like the first flowers of spring—vibrant, alive, and bringing joy to those around you. In this time of renewal, know that your generosity through Mission and Service will help even more seeds of hope take root and grow. Thank you.

**CENTERING**

**SCRIPTURE READING**

* *The gospel reading today is from* Luke 13:1–9 – The Voice Translation, *but I’d like to go back a couple of verses, to* Luke 12:54-56. In Luke, chapter 12, *Jesus is teaching a large crowd of people, and tells them many stories, about how they can live rightly, and thrive in difficult times.*

**RESPONSE TO THE SCRIPTURES – 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.

**REFLECTION**

**HYMN – MV #78 God Weeps**

* *During this Lenten time of waiting, we are reminded and we are grateful that God waits for us to grow, to learn, to turn and repent, and to take action for justice and kindness, with humble hearts.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4Tm5DbacLo>

God weeps at love withheld, at strength misused,

at children’s innocence abused,

and till we change the way we love, God weeps.

God bleeds at anger’s fist, at trust betrayed,

at women battered and afraid,

and till we change the way we win, God bleeds.

God cries at hungry mouths, at running sores,

at creatures dying without cause,

and till we change the way we care, God cries.

God waits for stones to melt, for peace to seed,

for hearts to hold each other’s need,

and till we understand the Christ, God waits.

**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**

**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.

In this season of Lent when the world feels like it’s in upheaval, let us remember the goodness that still abounds around us.

And let us take heart as the winter turns to spring in the Northern Hemisphere,

And as we feel the nearness of our God – as close to us as our breath. Amen.

**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 # 182 Grateful** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cNT8NSG2QE>

**Grateful for the life you give us, thankful for your Holy Son,**

**joyful in your Spirit flowing over all, O God of Love.**

**Grateful for the Bread of Heaven, thankful for your Holy Word,**

**joyful in your mercy flowing, we will praise you.**

You are more than we imagine,

Ancient, Holy, Living Lord.

Even when we doubt your presence

you are faithful to your Word. **(R)**

May our lives proclaim your justice,

may our voices sing your praise.

May our hands work in your service

to the glory of your name. **(R)**

**COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING**

*The commissioning and blessing today is from a new book I received from my sister, “Liturgies from Below: Praying with People at the Ends of the World”, by Claudio Carvalhaes; p. 58, 2020.*

Keep your eyes wide open,

your hands willing,

your hearts generous,

your ears attentive,

your senses awake,

your feet light,

your hope alive,

and your faith on fire.

Go and shine wherever you may be.

Go and embrace with tenderness

all of life

with its sorrows and joys.

Go and know what divinity expects

and what your brothers and sisters seek.

May the creative force bless you.

And may you be encouraged and enveloped by

the tender breath that brings freedom.

**EXTINGUISH THE CHRIST CANDLE**

**SENDING SONG –** **VU # 642 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.

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