**Covenant**

***The United Church of Canada***

a safe place for all people to worship

Minister: Laura Hutchison

**COVENANT UNITED CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2025**

**FOURTH 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, 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.

 Who doesn’t love a Potluck? Join us at 5:00 pm on Thursday, April 17th for our Maundy Thursday service, communion & potluck supper!

**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, 2 & 4) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xh4IoSRcyLM]((verses%201,%202%20&%204)%20https://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.

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.

**CALL TO WORSHIP --** *by Rod Sykes for the gathering; adapted*

A prodigal son went wandering and lost himself in a phony life.

Humbled and ruined, he returned to ask to be his father’s slave.

But the old man came running and wrapped him in a hug.

**Lost as we may be, the love of God comes running.**

A scheming rascal duped his brother and tore the family apart.

Wiser and more confident, he returned, fearing his brother’s wrath.

But his sibling listened to their father, and forgave him with a kiss.

**Unworthy as we may be, the love of God comes running.**

Whatever our failings and foibles, however we have fallen short,

the mystery of grace forestalls our fate, and the love of God comes running.

**So we come running with lifted eyes and hearts, to this time of worship.**

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

**PRAYERS OF APROACH** – **O God, Prodigal, Extravagant Spirit, sometimes life’s events call for generosity, and sometimes they call for restraint. Sometimes they call for thrift, and other times they call for abandon. Help us in our discernment so that we can respond to life’s events in the ways that are both faithful and life giving, ways that show others and ourselves that you are present in all events even if we can not feel you there. Show us your way through the wilderness. Amen.**

**HYMN – VU # 271There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy (verses 1, 4 & 5)** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilFTdf9P0gw>

There’s a wideness in God’s mercy

like the wideness of the sea;

there’s a kindness in God’s justice

which is more than liberty.

Troubled souls, why will you scatter

like a crowd of frightened sheep?

Foolish hearts, why will you wander

from a love so true and deep?

For the love of God is broader

than the measures of the mind,

and the heart of the Eternal

is most wonderfully kind.

**MINUTE FOR MISSION**

Working to empower women and change the world.

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In India, social and cultural factors limit access to theological education for women in comparison to men. The Rev. B. Silpa Rani is actively encouraging women to pursue theological education and engage in leadership roles.

When Silpa started her first degree in Theology, she spent two years as the only woman in a class of 16. Now, years later, as she works on her doctoral dissertation, she has seen a gradual increase in the enrolment of women in theological programs. While this is encouraging, Silpa recognizes that there is still a long journey forward. While she seeks to empower modern women, she is also working to shed light on the experiences of women and minorities of the past.

Silpa was the recipient of a theological education scholarship, which paved her way to join the faculty at Bishop's College, Kolkata. She has been exploring the unique identity of the Qumran community within the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls. She is actively researching to identify the women, children, and minority groups of the society, drawing parallels between the Qumran context and contemporary Indian context.

Your Mission and Service gifts provide support to leaders like Silpa, who are actively working to empower women and change the world.

**CENTERING**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Psalm 32**; VU p.759

**2 Corinthians 5:16-21** – New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

**Luke 15:1-3; 11-32** – Good News Translation

**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 – VU #589 Lord, Speak to Me**

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Voices+United+%23589+Lord%2C+Speak+to+Me&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA944CA945&oq=Voices+United+%23589+Lord%2C+Speak+to+Me&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRiPAtIBCTUyMzBqMGoxNagCCLACAQ&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:35da4782,vid:8BKHqmAIOBU,st:0>

Lord, speak to me that I may speak

in living echoes of your tone;

as you have sought, so let me seek

your straying children lost and lone.

O lead me, so that I may lead

the wandering and the wavering feet;

O feed me, so that I may feed

your hungering ones with manna sweet.

O teach me, so that I may teach

the precious truths which you impart;

and wing my words, that they may reach

the hidden depths of many a heart.

O fill me with your fullness, Lord,

until my very heart o’erflows

in kindling thought and glowing word,

your love to tell, your praise to show.

**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 – VU # 716 My Life Flows On** *(video instrumental only)*

<https://www.google.com/search?sa=X&sca_esv=f6e1a6aa34ad27a3&rlz=1C5CHFA_enCA944CA945&udm=7&sxsrf=AHTn8zq_cq_6Q6wKyfIFENMGD6fMII6i-w:1742654090534&q=Voices+united+%23716+my+life+flows+on+lyrics&ved=2ahUKEwjgmaGw9J2MAxWal4kEHWEdFgYQ8ccDKAJ6BAgREAQ&biw=1487&bih=1121&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:8bccfc5e,vid:anzrY5vKfLk,st:0>

My life flows on in endless song,

above earth’s lamentation.

I hear the sweet, though far off hymn

that hails a new creation.

Through all the tumult and the strife,

I hear the music ringing:

It finds an echo in my soul –

how can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comforts die?

My Saviour still is living.

What though the shadows gather ‘round?

A new song Christ is giving,

No storm can shake my inmost calm,

while to that Rock I’m clinging:

since Love commands both heaven and earth,

how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear,

and hear their death knells ringing:

when friends rejoice both far and near,

how can I keep from singing?

In prison cell and dungeon vile

our thoughts to them are winging:

when friends by shame are undefiled,

how can I keep from singing?

I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin;

I see the blue above it;

and day by day this pathway smooths,

since first I learned to love it.

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,

a fountain ever springing:

all things are mine since I am Christ’s –

how can I keep from singing?

**COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING**

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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