

Fourth Sunday of Lent
A Service for All Ages - March 22, 2020
St. Albert United Church

COMMUNITY WELCOME

Tawow, Welkom, Bienvenue, Welcome as we join with others of St. Albert United Church and friends around the world on this Fourth Sunday of Lent as we continue to explore the call to thoughtful and prayerful reflection.

As we worship, we acknowledge in this region of the Province of Alberta that we do so in the traditional lands of Treaty 6 First Nations and a significant trading community of the Métis Nation.

St. Albert United Church affirms that all are welcome to share fully in the life and work regardless of age, race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, belief, economic circumstance, ability or background.

- If you have a concern regarding someone who is ill, grieving or in need, please do not hesitate to inform the ministers.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

In the darkest valley,
at the banquet table;
in the hard work of life,
at the moments of ease;
in our day-to-day reality,
at times set aside—
like this time, now—
for worship, for listening, for paying attention;
with every step we take:
goodness and mercy follow us;
our cups overflow.

~ written by Joanna Harader and posted on **Spacious Faith.** <https://spaciousfaith.com/>

GATHERING PRAYER:

God, help me to relax.

Take from me the tension
that makes peace impossible.

Take from me the fears
that do not allow me to venture.

Take from me the worries
that blind my sight.

Take from me the distress
that hides your joy.

Help me to know
that I am with you,
that I am in your care,
that I am in your love,
that you and I are one.

~ written by David Adam in "*The Open Gate*" SPCK 1994. Posted on the **Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand** website. <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/>

Make a Lenten Prayer Chain

Materials Needed:

40 Paper strips long enough to write on and chain together.

If possible use shades of purple, the colour of Lent.

Scissors

Glue or Stapler

Pens, Crayons, or Markers

Directions:

Every day write a name of someone or a situation you plan to pray for that day.

Take the paper strip and use the glue or stapler to create a circle.

Add the second one through the circle creating links as the days progress.

Since we are halfway through Lent, feel free to make two links a day.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Creator God, You created the world out of chaos, and we confess that our world right now is in chaos. It is difficult for us right now to make sense out of what is happening. Illness and death have interrupted our lives. The world human beings created has turned upside down. But You are our constant, O God. You are our compass, O Christ. You are the wind that moves us, O Spirit. Guide us in this time, where we confess we need You more than ever, to be our foundation, to guide our way, and to move us into compassion and love. In the name of Christ, who journeys with us now and always, we pray. Amen.

Prayer created/adapted by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, rev-o-lution.org

TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION**SCRIPTURE READINGS:**

A reading from the Psalms:

Psalm 23 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;^[a]

³ he restores my soul.^[b]

He leads me in right paths^[c]
for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^[d]
I fear no evil;

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely^[e] goodness and mercy^[f] shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.^[g]



A reading from the Gospels:

John 9 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We^[a] must work the works of him who sent me^[b] while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷ saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.”

¹⁰ But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus^[c] to be the Messiah^[d] would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵ He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.

³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”^[e] ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir?^[f] Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord,^[g] I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

REFLECTION:

Take a few moments to reflect on all you have read.

Create A Lenten Prayer Space

Try this Lenten practice: creating a collection of symbolic items in a central place. Items included are a candle, a cross, an empty bowl to represent fasting, a scripture passage and/or prayer, and a small Bible. These items are all placed on a purple cloth. Other items may include a poem, art postcard or alms tin.

Candle: A symbol of God’s presence with us. A suggestion as the candle is lit, “We light the candle to remind us that God is with us in this place, at this time.”

Purple cloth: The purple of lent will be familiar as a colour for a time of waiting.

Empty bowl: Be reminded of the need to let go of the things that hold us back and the connections and hopes that move us forward through this anxious time.

Scripture, poem, or prayer: This Sunday either the image of the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 or Jesus the Healer are good choices. Or something that speaks to you.

Cross: Take time to look at the cross and reflect about the crucifixion and the resurrection.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

For those who are sick
and those who care for them,
that they might be restored to health
and receive all that they need this day:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those who have died
and those who mourn,
that they might know consolation:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For nurses and doctors,
and all who work in hospitals and medical care,
that they might be sustained with energy for their work,
and might have all that they need for good patient care:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For public health experts,
for scientists and bioengineers
working to understand the virus and to find treatment and prevention
that they might have insight and success:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For the World Health Organisation,
for government officials,
that policy and practice might be wise and effective:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those in quarantine,
that their spirits might be sustained,
and for those separated from people they love
by the circumstances of this illness:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those who are afraid,
that they might know peace:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those who are being harassed or persecuted
as racism is expressed around this illness,
that they might be protected:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

For those whose sin of racism clouds their eyes, minds and hearts,
that they might repent and love their neighbour:

Gracious God, receive our prayer.

Gracious God, receive our prayers,
those made with these words
and those made in the murmurs of our hearts.

In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

Written by Jemma Allen. <https://revgalblogpals.org/2020/02/20/thursday-prayer-covid-19/>

Jemma Allen is a priest of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia and primarily expresses that ministry as a counsellor and spiritual director. She serves on the Board of RevGalBlogPals.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SHARING OF GIFTS

In the midst of struggles, God is present. In times of grief and times of weariness and tragedy God weeps with us. its During these days of social distancing and self isolation, may we be reminded to share of ourselves through holding one another in prayer, reaching out to others by telephone, offering assistance when possible, sharing our time and our gifts with those in need.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

You call us to be your light in the darkness,
your voice in the wilderness,
your hope for the hopeless.
You give us strength in our weakness,
peace and gentleness, words and boldness,
to proclaim more of you and of us, less. Amen.

~ written by John Birch, and posted on **Faith and**

Worship. http://www.faithandworship.com/Lectionary_C/YearC_28th_in_Ordinary

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR UPDATES AND INFORMATION

EXTINGUISHING OF TENEBRAE CANDLE:

Introduction:

Tenebrae, Latin for shadows, is a service where light fades into darkness. Dating back to the eighth century, its diminishing light symbolizes the declining loyalty of Jesus' disciples and the waning of the light as Jesus departs from the world.

In one sense it is the reversal of the Advent wreath, when a candle is lit each week and the light grows in anticipation of the light, Jesus Christ, being born at Christmas.

Starting Lent with the brightness of the Christ Candle and six candles representing each of the Sundays of the Lenten Season, the darkness grows as a candle is extinguished each week in anticipation of Jesus dying on the cross on Good Friday, when the Christ Candle is snuffed out.

Meditation:

It's Sunday morning. Last week, with all its demands, is over. The coming week, with yet another round of challenges and demands, is not quite here. You are invited to close your eyes and be in the moment. No matter where you are in your thoughts and feelings—relieved about what you have accomplished, anxious about what's left undone, concerned about people or projects—no matter where you are in your journey this day—you are encouraged to set all that aside and consider where you are right now. Whatever is true for you right now, in this moment, whether it be joy or sadness, gratitude or anxiety, let it come forward. When it is fully present, then listen . . . for God is present in these moments, too. God meets you where you are and calls you forward, moment by moment, guiding you slowly but surely toward transformation.

(Silent time.)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain caused by the lack of basic needs—lack of food, of shelter, of education, of healthcare, of love.

(A candle is extinguished.)

Let us pray:

All: Loving God, we thank you that you are with us, and that we may call upon you no matter where we are, or what we are feeling. Keep us mindful of your presence and trusting in your promise—that you are working with us in the moment-by-moment unfolding of our lives. Amen.

BLESSING: An Irish Prayer

May God give you...

For every storm, rainbow,

For every tear, a smile,

For every care a promise,

And a blessing in each trial.

For every problem life sends,

A faithful friend to share,

For ever sigh, a sweet song,

And an answer for each prayer.

MUSICAL POSTLUDE

All Ages Activity





Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind
John 9