

Palm Sunday - April 5, 2020
St. Albert United Church

COMMUNITY WELCOME

Tawow, Bienvenue, Welcome to St. Albert United Church on this Palm Sunday as we gather through the wonder of virtual means.

As we come together, we acknowledge that we do so in the traditional lands of Treaty 6 First Nations and a significant trading community of the Métis Nation.

We also affirm all are welcome to share fully in our 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 inform the ministers.

Note that for the songs/hymns there is a link for the words and music. Simply copy and paste.

We gather, cultivating space for everyone...

CALL TO WORSHIP

As we enter this time of Holy Week,
we do so knowing that many have travelled this way before.
We will travel a familiar road from triumph to betrayal;
through death toward the hope of resurrection.
We are familiar with the journey to the cross;
during this time of a global pandemic it feels so very real.
We look to the scientific experts for reassurance
We look to each other for connection
We look to our faith to see us through this time
We remind ourselves that Jesus leads the way.

GATHERING PRAYER:

O Christ, you entered the city as a poor man
not in style but simply,
yet still you caused uproar, and questions everywhere;
you drew the expectations of a hungry crowd,
and brought buried conflicts to the light.
May we, who are sometimes swayed by the crowd's approval,
and who often avoid conflict
for fear of its cost to us,
hold fast to the gospel of peace and justice
and follow faithfully in your way of compassion and solidarity
with those who are poor and excluded,
wherever it may lead us. **Amen.**

Written by Kathy Galloway, and posted on the “Monthly Prayers” page of the [Christian Aid](#) website. Used with permission.

HYMN: “[All Glory, Laud and Honour](#)”

TIME FOR ALL AGES: “The Donkey and the King”

<https://youtu.be/l3RVJ9NI7O8> (simply let it play out)

HYMN: “[Hosanna](#)”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

We confess, O God, that we are broken. We are not together physically. We are struggling and suffering in the world, in this time of isolation. However, we confess, O God, that You are our healer. You are the one unites, who binds us together. We confess that we feel lost, in an unfamiliar time, with an unknown future.

But we also confess, O God, that we have an opportunity to learn the needs of our neighbours more clearly, to listen to one another more deeply. We confess, O God, that at times we are finding more spaces to rest. We confess that we are also exhausted. We confess all the ways in which we distressed, ill at ease, where we struggle with the space we are in; we also confess the simple pleasures we have in activities we have more time for. In all this

weirdness, O God, help us to find You, to welcome You in our lives, to know that Your reign is not of this world.

Remind us that this will be temporary, but Your love is eternal. In the name of Christ, who knows our isolation, who knows what it is like to struggle to find rest, who knows our needs in this time, we pray. Amen.

Liturgy created/adapted by Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, rev-o-lution.org. Used with permission.

WORDS OF GRACE AND ASSURANCE:

God's steadfast love endures forever. No matter what you are going through, no matter what difficulties you face, know that you are loved deeply by God. You matter to God. The hairs on your head are accounted for. Breathe deeply into the Spirit of Life, give thanks for your life, and bless one another. Care for one another. Love one another. Know that God's steadfast love will endure beyond what we are going through now. God's steadfast love endures forever. Amen.

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TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION

We listen, attentive to the voice of Jesus

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

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Holy week is a time for reorienting ourselves and taking stock in how we respond to the challenges that life throws at us. How do we react in the face of adversity and possibly death.

The psalms used for Holy Week allow us to reflect on how Jesus' passion is reflected in both our personal life and in our corporate life.

These particular verses of Psalm 31 follow a traditional lament: invocation, complaint, petition, trust, praise with some back and forth flow. It is a reminder once again that through the psalms, we voice our conviction that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1:5).

A reading from the Psalms:

Psalm 31:9-16 (NRSV)

- 9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
- 10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,^[a]
and my bones waste away.
- 11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror^[b] to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
- 12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
- 13 For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.
- 14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, “You are my God.”
- 15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
- 16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

Jesus’ earthly ministry is coming to a dramatic end. Christ is about to enter the gates of Jerusalem to voices raised by songs of thanksgiving, only to hear those same voices turn first to accusations and then to jeers as he goes to his death on a cross. The journey is from triumphant entrance to death on a cross has significant elements to it. Too often we want to rush from the exciting palm parade to the wonder of Easter, skipping the disappointment of betrayal and the horror of the cross.

A reading from the Gospels:

Matthew 21:1-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.^[a]” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd^[b] spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” ¹¹ The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

One: Herein we seek wisdom. **All: Thanks be to God.**

SILENT REFLECTION:

We take a few moments to reflect on all we have heard.

HYMN: [“Hosanna, Loud Hosanna”](#)

MESSAGE: “[Courage in the Midst of False Hope](#)” Part I
 “[Courage in the Midst of False Hope](#)” Part II- Rev.

Deborah Hoekstra

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

God of the many and the one, hear our prayers.
Hear our individual voices gathered together into one chorus of prayer during this time of self isolation and separation.
May we know that love surrounds each of us.
May we find strength to follow in your steps.
Aid is in seeking ways to live out our faith boldly and creatively.
Help us to tear down walls of hatred and despair and to build bridges of justice and healing.
Hear us as we mourn the dead: and all who have loved and cared for them.
Hear us as we pray for the living: those struggling for breath, those who have come through the worst and the families with conflicting emotions.
Hear us as we seek wisdom, strength and compassion through these trying times through Jesus Christ, we offer our prayers.
Amen.

SHARING OF GIFTS

It is very important that we remember to continue to share our gifts of time, connection, prayer, talent and resources with God’s people. Please, consider continuing to support agencies and associations which have relied on your financial support prior to these changing world circumstances. We recognize that during these difficult times, personal finances may be severely diminished. However, please consider contributing financially as you are able to support St. Albert United Church’s ministry. Expenses continue even with the suspension of services and operations.

Please check the church website for ways in which you can support ministry with time, talents and resources.

(www.stalbertunited.ca)

SHARING OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN GOD'S WORK

Reach out in a variety of ways to your family, friends, and fellow congregation members—connect with and support each other.

Please check the church website for updates and information.

(www.stalbertunited.ca)

HYMN: “[This What Love Is](#)” by John Elefante

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:

We have gathered here, week after week, sharing a common quest for a deeper faith and a deeper experience of the divine. I invite you now to close your eyes and let go of the things that distract and concern you. Listen! The time is drawing near. Jesus is preparing to enter Jerusalem. How will we greet him? Will we follow him all the way to the Cross?

The power of Jesus is that he lived what he taught, even when it led to his death. He lived with an abiding awareness of God, radiating the light of God in all he said and did. But that light was too much for the world.

There are forces today, as there were in ancient Judea, that conspire to put it out. Where are we in this drama? What are we willing to risk to follow Jesus?

(Silent time.)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of illness and disease in the world.

(A candle is extinguished.)

Let us pray.

Loving God, there are so many choices before us every day. Choices offered by our friends, our families, our culture, our own past. Some of them encourage the well-being of the earth, ourselves and our neighbors; others are destructive. Help us to distinguish between them. May we learn from the choices of Jesus and embody compassion, justice, and inclusion in all we say and do. Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH:

Whatever wilderness the Spirit has brought you to:

walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God

walk in peace, under the shelter of the Most High

walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you. Amen.

Written by Joanna Harader, and posted on her [Spacious Faith](#) blog. Used with permission.

MUSICAL POSTLUDE