



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

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Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Dorothy Busby and Gina McAvoy

Music: Jodi Allen

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Readers:

ORDER OF WORSHIP

March 29, 2020
Fifth Sunday in Lent Year A

WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As we gather for worship today we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory. We honour the Cree and Métis people for whom this place has been a homeland for thousands of years. We respect the sacredness of our home and the ground on which we walk and we are grateful to gather here in peace and hope.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNIVERSARIES & CONCERNS:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

People of God, we are here today to be in conversation with the holy.

Speak to us and through us, voice of God.

Son of God, we are here today to be in conversation with the holy.

Speak to us and through us, Word of God.

Spirit of God, we are here today to be in conversation with the holy.

Speak to us and through us, breath of God.

OPENING PRAYER:

Creative God, we offer our comments and questions as a continuation of our conversation with your creative spirit. May we

hear your voice and come to worship with our hearts, minds, hands, and ears unbound. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:

Please join me in a prayer of confession. Unwrap the gauze of lament from your heads, hearts, ears, and mouths so we may join the saints in conversation with God.

We are often unaware of the ways we can call one another back to life. But you, O God, see us asleep and dying to our old ways and you are filled with compassion for all of us. You sing over dry bones and reach out toward death so we may hold the hand of compassion and rise up!

All you who sleep; all you who were left or lost, awaken and take the hand of compassion. We are in conversation with the Word of God!

We raise our voices together. We look into one another's faces and proclaim: you are not alone; you are walking together in innocence by the power of all that is holy and always with us. You are alive in Christ.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

We are continually amazed, Great God of sacred story, by the ways in which the old, old stories of the Bible, become fresh and new.

Be with us this day, in the receiving and in the proclaiming, so that these words can become for us fresh and new.

Speak to us through the power of your spirit. Through our encounter with these stories, call us to greater discipleship. **Amen.**

[Written by Beth W Johnston, L/E 2020 Year A Gathering, page 37]

CHOIR ANTHEM: *“Prepare the Way”* – Besig & Price, as performed on March 25, 2018 by the Melfort United Church Choir – follow link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj0n5kn2lwY>

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

RESPONSORIAL READING:

PSALM 130 (VU pp.852-853):

Out of the depths I cry to God.

HEBREW READING:

EZEKIEL 37:1-14:

The valley of dry bones.

EPISTLE READING:

ROMANS 8:6-11:

The Spirit is life, not death.

GOSPEL READING:

JOHN 11:1-45

The raising of Lazarus.

SERMON:

Moderator Richard Bott

Sermon for Online Worship, March 29, 2020

Fifth Sunday in Lent

(Text for a sermon preached online on Tuesday, March 24, 2020.)

A reflection on John 11:1-45.

A powerful story of life and death, and life anew.

From the stories in different parts of the scriptures, it's pretty clear to me that Mary, Martha and Lazarus were important people in Jesus' life. We have the story of Mary, a disciple who sat at Jesus' feet, learning from him, at another time anointing him with perfume; Martha, one of the disciples who embodied loving one's neighbour with her service... and Lazarus, who, this story tells of Jesus bringing back from the dead!

What's speaking to me in this scripture – at this time – are the various ways that people responded to Jesus, and his response to them. If we had read the verses that came before 17, we would have found out that Jesus had been notified that Lazarus was ill a number of days before Lazarus died. Jesus waited two days after hearing the news, before heading to Bethany.

Remember, Jesus was well known as a healer by that time, especially by his disciples. So it makes a lot of sense that, when Martha heard that Jesus was arriving – I’m guessing much later than she expected – I hear hurt and anger in her voice. She knew that Jesus loved her brother. She knew that if Jesus had been there, he would have healed Lazarus. And she knew that her brother was dead. So she who was the “go getter”, the person who needed to take action, was right there – to tell him, Jesus, how she felt. “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

In fact, when Martha brought Mary to Jesus, because Jesus wanted a moment with her, her cry was the same, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus could hear the sadness. Jesus could hear the anger. Jesus could see it on the faces of all of those folks who had come to grieve with the sisters... and Jesus wept, too. Jesus understood their pain, felt his own, and cried. Mixed in with those tears, we hear Martha’s powerful statement of faith, “Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

In the midst of all of this grief, expressed in sadness and in anger, Jesus turns to the tomb and he calls on God – and calls Lazarus out. He calls Lazarus out from being in the tomb into the air; from being wrapped in grave-cloth, to being unbound; from death to life. In the midst of grief, Jesus brought the most amazing, the most unimaginable, the most impossible, time of celebration.

As we live into this time of Covid-19, as we watch what is happening in the world – in places where the medical systems have been overwhelmed, and in the places that have responded to the best of their ability, and in the places that are still waiting for their first peak – we are seeing confusion, and chaos, and grief.

I find it deeply comforting that our God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, understands our fear, understands our anger, understands our sadness and our grief – and is with us in those feeling and in this time. I find it deeply comforting that I can look into the world and see the Holy Spirit moving – in the ways that communities are coming together, in the willingness of medical professionals – and others - who were retired coming back into service for the community; in the offers from neighbours, who don’t know each other, working to making sure that those around have what is needed; in choices that are being made to LIVE life in a time when everything is uncertain, and our emotions are all over the place.

In this story, even as he wept, Jesus called Lazarus from death to life, from grave-cloth to freedom, from the tomb to open air... what might he, even as he weeps, be calling us out of – be calling us in to?

Amen, and amen.

https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/moderator_online_service_sermon_march_29_2020.pdf

OUR RESPONSE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

We gather today to remember the promises made to our ancestors.

We belong to one another.

We are born into earthly families that form our cultural identities.

We belong to one another.

We are also born into families that form our spiritual identities.

We belong to one another.

We pray for those who do not share our beliefs about God and ask God for the grace that will keep us out of the rivalry.

We belong to one another.

We pray for ourselves and ask God for love that will reveal to us who we are, who we are becoming, and ways that we may love and be loved when our beliefs are challenged.

We belong to one another. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

COMMISSIONING & BLESSING:

Called to carry the blessing into the world, we depart from this space.

We belong to one another.

We move together in spirit so we will remember none of us goes alone.

We belong to one another. Amen.

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Seasons of the Spirit – Seasons FUSION Lent-Easter 2020; Flames of the Spirit, Resources for Worship Like Bread for the Journey; Feasting on the Word, Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1 Advent through Pentecost Worship Companion; The United Church of Canada Lent-Easter 2020 Year A Gathering Resources for Worship Planners. Used with permission.*

NEXT WEEK'S (April 5, 2020, Palm Sunday) READINGS:

Matthew 21:1-11;

Psalm 118;

Isaiah 50:4-9a;

Philippians 2:5-11.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH:

Cancellations/Postponements

Lenten Lunches @ MCC - cancelled

IPC Canada photography appointments April 3rd, 4th, 20th & 21st -
postponed

Bridge Tournament – April 8th - cancelled

Women's Gathering @ Calvary United April 24-26th – cancelled
Garage Sale - May 1st & 2nd – postponed. Note: at this time we are
not accepting donations for the garage sale.

Living Skies Regional Gathering (Humboldt) May 21-24th -
cancelled

Transfer or Applying for Membership

If you wish to transfer or apply for membership in our church,
please contact the church office or a member of the Membership
Committee.

Changes to Contact Information

If you've changed your address or phone number, please advise
the Church Office so that we can keep your information current.

Thank you!

Emergency Pastoral Care

Should you need emergency pastoral care please call
Rev. Emmanuel at 306-930-4093.

FundScrip Deadline for April

The next FundScrip deadline is Thursday, April 30th. The gift
cards will be ready for pickup on Thursday, May 7th.

REMINDER - Easter Newsletter

The Easter newsletter will be coming out in April. All people wishing to contribute to the newsletter are asked to get their submissions in by 9am on Tuesday, March 31st. Submissions can be dropped off at the church office or emailed to melfortuc@sasktel.net.

Stewardship Seconds

Our stewardship reflects our relationship with God; our relationship with God transfigures our stewardship.