

**Order of Worship February 21, 2021**  
**First Sunday in Lent ~ Celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion**

Words of welcome

Good morning, beloved people. Welcome to these words of church. In this service we will be remembering Jesus telling his disciples to eat broken bread and to drink from the cup, so before you get settled into your couches and lazy boys, prepare a bit of bread and some juice or wine if you like, or even water will do, so when the time comes, you will be ready to remember Jesus in this tangible on way. The prepared elements remind us our salvation comes from God. It is not about whether we are good enough or member of a church, or old enough. It is not about us at all. It is about Jesus who is very partial to each one of us. It is Jesus who invites us to come and remember.

May the lighting of a candle be a reminder of God's living presence within and all around.

Lighting the Christ Candle

One: We light this light

**All: in the name of the God who creates life  
in the name of the Saviour who loves life  
in the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.**

Hymn: #295 When long before time

1. When long before time and the worlds were begun,  
when there was no earth and no sky and no sun,  
and all was deep silence and night reigned supreme,  
and even our Maker had only a dream...
2. ...the silence was broken when God sang the Song,  
and light pierced the darkness and rhythm began,  
and with its first birth cries creation was born,  
and creaturely voices sang praise to the morn.
3. The sounds of the creatures were one with their Lord's,  
their harmonies sweet and befitting the Word;  
the Singer was pleased as the earth sang the song;  
the choir of the creatures reechoes it long.
4. Though, down through the ages, the Song disappeared,  
its harmonies broken and almost unheard,  
the Singer comes to us to sing it again;  
our God-is-with in the world now as then.
5. The Light has returned as it came once before;

- the Song of the Lord is our own song once more;  
 so let us all sing with one heart and one voice  
 the song of the Singer in whom we rejoice.
6. To you, God the Singer, our voices we raise;  
 to you Song Incarnate, we give all our praise;  
 to you, Holy Spirit, our life and our breath,  
 be glory forever, through life and through death.

Call to Worship and Prayer: First Sunday in Lent - PWS&D

**L:** Lent is a journey with Jesus toward Jerusalem, toward the cross,  
 toward resurrection and new life.

We will be transformed and blessed on this journey.

**P:** **We are pilgrims on a journey.**  
**We are travelers on the road.**

**L:** We undertake the journey knowing we will not remain the same.

**P:** **We are pilgrims on a journey.**  
**We are travelers on the road.**

**L:** The journey will take time. We will feel the strain  
 in our bodies and in our souls, yet love will urge us onward.

**P:** **We are pilgrims on a journey.**  
**We are travelers on the road.**

**L:** Let us start the journey with prayer:

**All:** **God of all times and places,**  
**as we begin the pilgrimage**  
**from life to death to new life,**  
**you will surprise us and nurture us.**  
**We put our trust in you,**  
**knowing you will guide and provide for us.**  
**In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.**

Ministry of Music:

Warning: Might cause ear worms

All God's Creatures Have A Place In The Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTKJUx18TL4>

Community looking back ~ looking ahead

Here we have come through all the ups and downs of another week. The daylight is longer, a week closer to spring. And the sun sparkling on the snow was gorgeous yesterday! It reminded me of my sister-in-law Bonnie who wrote on her Feb 14, facebook page:

A pleasure to shovel snow this morning; rabbit tracks on the

driveway and sunlight on snow generated a haiku:  
 rabbits' party site  
 strewn with sunlit diamonds, joy  
 everywhere

What has the week held for you? Take a moment to recall the good stuff, the hard stuff, the stuff that made you grateful or made you laugh or cry or wonder. Take a moment and give thanks for being brought safely through the week... take a moment and share a story with someone in your household, or give a call to a friend, or email it along for the service next week!

#### Lenten Learning Moment: Introduction

This past week, Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of the church season of Lent. In the past years time has been taken each Sunday in Lent to learn about a particular issue in our world. We have learned about water issues, poverty, hunger and issues around food security. We learned about refugees and took a look at the Muslim faith when we were involved in sponsoring Ahmad and his family. Last year the United Nations declared 2020 as the Year of Plant Health and with the help of local experts we learned about the importance of bees, how marigolds are good for gardens, and what plants need to thrive. With the interruption of the pandemic, we didn't get to hear about Trees in Minto. We will have to come back to this at some point!

This year with the pandemic still in full swing, it seems appropriate to take some time to learn about past pandemics and how they shaped and altered the world at large. Epidemics (a disease that affects a large number of people within a community, population, or region) and pandemics (an epidemic that is global in nature) have been happening for thousands of years. In the whole scheme of things, this is not new. But it is new to us who are living in it and through it in this time and place. I suspect we all have a story or two about how it is changing us, perhaps giving us a greater appreciation for life, for nature, or perhaps life has become more challenging with covid fatigue setting in. Pandemics change us and the course of history. Over the next weeks we are going to learn about pandemics/epidemics in the past and how they have shaped the world as we know it today.

#### Offering

While Joan was waiting for cataract surgery, she overheard an exchange on the other side of the curtain:

“Are those your own teeth?” asked the intake nurse.  
 “I hope so,” the elderly voice replied, “I paid for them.”<sup>1</sup>

**We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be;**

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<sup>1</sup> Reader's Digest, March 2021

**all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee. Amen**

Let us be intentional in giving this week of time and energy, skill and resources. The life-giving practice of sharing what we have steadies us in all the twists and turns of life. Offerings for the church can be received Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the church, send a cheque in the mail, or by e-transfers.

As we come to a time of reading words from the Ancient Sacred Text of the Christian faith, let us seek the help of the Holy Spirit. With the psalmist, let us pray,

**Lead us in your truth, O God, and teach us,  
for you are the God of our salvation.**

**For you we wait. Amen.** Psalm 25:5

Listen for the Word of God.

New Testament Reading: Mark 1:9-15

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved;<sup>[a]</sup> with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup>And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

The Word of God for you people of God. Thanks be to God.

Sermon: Angels Attending

The gospel lectionary reading for the first Sunday in Lent is always about Jesus, after his baptism, being driven out into the wilderness. While Matthew and Luke go into great detail about Jesus not eating and being famished at the end of 40 days and how Jesus answers the temptations of Satan to turn stones into bread, to bow down and have all the kingdoms in the world, and to jump from the pinnacle of the temple heights and land safely on the ground, here in Mark, the wilderness journey is a mere 2 verses. Mark does not say anything about Jesus being famished. Nor does Mark go into great detail about the temptations. The text simply says he was "tempted by Satan." Only in the gospel of Mark do we read the interesting little detail about Jesus being "with the wild beasts." In Matthew it was at the end of the temptations that angels suddenly come and wait on

Jesus. Luke does not mention angels at all. Here in Mark, the text simply says, “and the angels waited on Jesus.”

It is this little detail in Mark that makes me wonder if it was there in the wilderness, where Jesus is totally vulnerable to wild beasts lurking about ready to attack his outer body and the temptations of Satan lurking about, ready to attack his inner spirit, that with all the practice, Jesus learned how to look danger in the face and not be undone with fear. I wonder if that is where he became intensely intimately aware of the presence of angels attending him, protecting, keeping him safe; where he learned to trust God fully with his body and soul. How else could he have made his way so graciously through the years of ministry: on the road without thought of where the next meal was coming from or facing without becoming undone, the religious powers that would eventually have him nailed to the cross. That dangerous wilderness place, nestled between words of baptism and the beginning his ministry of proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God coming near, was a transforming place for Jesus. He did not come out of the wilderness the same as when he went in. He came out an evangelist, fearless, rooted, solid.

All of you know something about wilderness places and wild beasts that threaten our well-being. Nobody gets through life without wilderness places, hard barren places of loss – loss of mental and physical health, loss of pay checks, loss of relationships, loss of dignity, loss of community, loss of loved ones, loss of certainty, loss of homes... the list goes on. These experiences shape us one way or another, for the better or for the worse. This pandemic feels a little bit like an extended desert, wilderness experience; the wild beast of a coronavirus with all its variants causing great uncertainty, keeping us on vigilant, wearing our masks, not gathering. This experience is shaping us whether we are aware of it or not. I am wondering if like Jesus in the wilderness, we are becoming aware of angels waiting on us too and learning to trust God is protecting and caring for us, keeping us safe. How are we being transformed so that we too, can look danger in the face and not be undone.

A story of God’s protection.

As many of you know, back in 2015 this congregation spearheaded the sponsoring of a Syrian refugee family. On October 17, 2016 the Almohamad family arrived. The committee was delighted when Jim and his wife Susan provided a house for the family to live in. Ahmad and his family continue to rent that house and remain in the Harriston Community. It was a wonderful adventure and the family is doing well, even birthing two little girls since arriving. We are so proud of them!

On a Sunday morning back in December the furnace wasn’t working and so Ahmad called Jim. Because there was not time to stop in before church he told Ahmad he would stop in afterwards to see if they could get things sorted out. “Does the furnace use batteries?” Ahmad asked. “Maybe it just needs a new battery.”

As promised after church Jim headed the car to Ahmad's. While on the way, his cell phone rang. It was Ahmad. Even though Jim was going to see Ahmad soon and thought about not answering the call, he picked it up anyway. Ahmad was delighted to report he had fixed the furnace. All it needed was the battery replaced in the thermostat. Jim didn't need to stop in. All was well and Jim headed for home.

Now it just so happened the Saturday night before, Ahmad had given an elderly friend who was not feeling well, a ride to the hospital. On Sunday afternoon Ahmad got the call: The friend tested positive for Covid 19 and that Ahmad needed to get tested. Well, to make a long story short, Ahmad did test positive along with several members of his family. They immediately went into quarantine for the next two weeks. How easily the virus spreads.

If Ahmad had not been able to get the furnace going and Jim had stopped in, it would not have been good. Now, Ahmad is a faithful Muslim and when he tells the story he says to Jim. "God protected you! God kept you from getting covid-19." And when Ahmad told me the story, he said with confidence in his voice, "God protected Jim."

In this story the pieces are all uncovered. But we do not often know all the details of a story, what is going on in the bigger picture. It makes me wonder how very often in the past God has protected us that we are not aware of! Who knows how God has protected us in the past bringing us safely to this time and place, protecting us and we didn't even know it! Angels attending, waiting on us more than we know! And if it happens that the beast of a virus lurks about endangering the body – even Jesus would know his body harmed unto death – that does not mean angels are not there attending making possible new beginnings we cannot begin to imagine.

In this wilderness with a wild beast of a coronavirus lurking behind every contagious breath, let us not be undone. Let us trust in angels attending, God's protection. How else have we come safely to this time and place. The time is now, the kingdom of God comes near. Let us repent – let us turn from believing if we are somehow good enough God will protect us, turn from thinking we have to earn God's love, turn from being afraid for our lives, turn from leaning on our own strength and abilities. Let us turn and believe the good news and lean into and not hesitate to proclaim, God is for us. God is with us. If a faithful Muslim man can say it, surely we can too!! We need only to gaze upon bread and wine/juice to be reminded of God's care for us. Alleluia.

#### Silent Reflection

*Take a few minutes to just breathe... in and out, in and out... to know the life that comes from the breath in and the breath out...*

#### Prayer of Confession

We confess O God, there are times we forget you, the Sovereign Maker are our Keeper,  
and we are undone by fear of being harmed in body and in spirit.

And so we pray,

**Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy**

**Lord Jesus, grant us your peace. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Turn your gaze to the bread and cup prepared – here is the sign God forgives and God loves. Where regret is real, pardon is granted and we are set free to begin again. There is grace enough for new beginnings in every moment and encounter in life. Amen.

### The Sacrament of Holy Communion

Invitation to the table

Thanks be to God for forgiveness and new beginnings,

Thanks be to God for this symbolic meal.

Secured in the love of God,

come you who hunger and thirst

for a deeper faith, for a better life, for a fairer world.

Come you who are longing for peace,

for it is the Prince of Peace who bids us come to the table.

Let us pray as we sing these words of longing.

Song: #198 I hunger and I thirst

1. I hunger and I thirst; Jesus my manna be:  
ye living waters, burst out of the rock for me.
2. Thou bruised and broken bread, my life-long wants supply;  
as living souls are fed, oh feed me, or I die.
3. Thou true life-giving vine, let me thy sweetness prove;  
renew my life with thine; refresh my soul with love.
4. Since first their course began, rough paths my feet have trod.  
Feed me, thou living bread; help me, thou Son of God.
5. For still the desert lies my thirsting soul before;  
O living waters, rise within me evermore.

The Apostle's Creed #539

Say with the saints down through the ages, what we believe:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven;  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

#### Institution

There at the table on the night Jesus was betrayed,  
was the one who would betray him with a kiss,  
another who was overly confident he would not deny knowing Jesus before morning.  
There were a couple others who argued about  
which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.  
There in the midst of all that messy stuff,  
Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it,  
gave it to his disciples and said, "Take eat; this is my body."  
Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them saying,  
"Drink from it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant,  
which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this in remembrance of me. "

#### Setting Apart the Elements

As Jesus set apart ordinary bread and wine  
so we take this bread and this juice  
to be set apart for this one holy use and mystery.  
Let us not seek to grasp what it all means.  
Let us simply be open to its potential to change us.

#### Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us pray.  
For us you were born, Lord Jesus,  
For us you healed, preached and taught and showed the way to heaven.  
You gave to us new hope, peace, joy and love.  
For us you died, and for us, you were raised to life again.  
And even now Jesus, you are present with us.

For all you have done and all you have promised,



what have we to offer?  
 Our hands are empty, our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things.  
 We are not fit to gather up the crumbs from under your table.

But with you there is mercy, with you there is power to change us.  
 So we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room.

Come and meet us in these gifts of symbolic bread and juice  
 that they may become for us your presence,  
 healing and forgiving and making us whole;  
 that we may become for you, your presence in this world,  
 seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly  
 so that your kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

#### Sharing of the Bread and Juice

Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, broke it and said,  
 “This is my body, broken for you.”

*Pause: Go ahead, take and eat the bread.*

And lifting up the cup he said,  
 “This is the new covenant sealed in my blood,  
 your sins are remembered no more.”

*Pause: Go ahead and drink from the cup.*

Christ has died, hallelujah,  
 Christ is risen, hallelujah,  
 Christ will come again, hallelujah, hallelujah.

#### Prayers of the People concluding with the Lord’s Prayer

As we enter into this holy season, O God,  
 we give you thanks for your promise of new life that sustains us,  
 especially as these months of pandemic stretch on.

We thank you:

for tiny signs of hope, even in a bleak landscape or on challenging day;  
 for glimpses of beauty in a smile or a ray of sunshine;  
 for scientific achievements that ease suffering in this time of pandemic;  
 for the people who support and serve others in times of weakness or loss;  
 for the chance to recover from mistakes, to begin again.

Lord of life, sustain us with your presence

and give us patience and perseverance as we await the future with you.

Continue to transform us O God, in this wilderness place, that we might come out of this  
 pandemic aware of your protection, trusting more fully in your angels attending us in the  
 dangerous places we find ourselves.

In the silence, we lift up to you those situation and persons who lay heavy on our hearts – even our enemies... *Pause...*

We pray for those on our prayer list...

In the busyness of this day grant us a stillness of seeing, O God  
 In the conflicting voices of our hearts, grant us a calmness of hearing.  
 Let our seeing and our hearing, our words and our actions  
 Be rooted in the silent certainty of your presence.  
 Let our passions for life and the longings for justice that stir within  
 Be grounded in the experience of your stillness.  
 Let our lives be rooted in the ground of your peace, O God, we pray,  
 in your name Jesus, you who teaches us to pray saying.

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Sending Out Song: # 556 Now let us from this table rise

1. Now let us from this table rise renewed in body, mind and soul;  
 with Christ we die and live again, whose selfless love has made us whole.
2. With minds alert, upheld by grace, to spread the Word in speech and deed,  
 we follow in the steps of Christ, at one with all in hope and need.
3. To fill each human house with love, it is the sacrament of care;  
 the work that Christ began to do we humbly pledge ourselves to share.
4. Then give us grace, companion-God, to choose again the pilgrim way,  
 and help us to accept with joy the challenge of tomorrow's day.

Benediction

In suffering and sorrow,

**God is with us.**

In death and resurrection

**God is with us**

Now and always,

**God is with us**

Closing Song #731

Shalom my friends, shalom my friends,

Shalom, shalom

God's peace go with you

God's peace go with you  
Shalom, shalom.