

Order of Worship March 21, 2021
The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Words of Welcome

Good morning beloved people of God. Welcome to church (or at least to these church words). My, how good it is to be here in the company of one another. And even though there are still restrictions on singing right out loud and shaking hands, at least we can look one another in the eye and take in live music. Even though face masks on required and we have to sit apart, the presence of each other is a precious gift in this sacred and serious place. The presence of each other is such a treasure in this time set apart to worship God. Welcome all of you.

May the light of the candle serve to remind us of God's living presence within and all around.

Lighting of Christ Candle

One: We light this light

All: in the name of the God who creates life

In the name of Saviour who loves life

In the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

Let us stand as able and sing the words of various verses found in Psalm 118.

Hymn: # 78 This is the day

1. This is the day, this is the day,
that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice,
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made,
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made.

2. Open to us, open to us, the gates of God, the gates of God.
We will go in, we will go in,
and praise the Lord, and praise the Lord.
Open to us the gates of God,
we will go in and praise the Lord.
Open to us, open to us the gates of God.

3. You are our God, you are our God,
we will praise your name, we will praise your name.
We will give thanks, we will give thanks
for your faithfulness, for your faithfulness.
You are our God we will praise your name.
We will give thanks for your faithfulness.

You are our God, you are our God we will praise your name.

Call to Worship and Prayer of Adoration and Confession: 5th Sunday in Lent – PWS&D

L: We are closer to the events in Jerusalem every day.

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

L: When your people were slaves, you led the faithful through the waters and set them free. But we struggle with the freedom you give us.

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

L: Always you reach out to us.

Yet so often we have ignored your open arms and fled from your grace and freedom — and our responsibility.

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

L: Let us pray.

All: Loving God, you have loved us beyond all measure, but we continue to look for life outside of your embrace. On this journey, remind us that true freedom comes in obedience to you and following where you lead. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Ministry of Music

Community Looking Back ~ Looking Ahead

Thank you Connie. Music is the part of worship that I have missed the most – listening to youtube or CD's is alright but it is not the same as live music, with the sound waves reverberating all around us. Thank you again! And thank you Jean for your leading in the hymns!

And how good it is to gather together again – even just us who have come make this gathering extraordinary.

How easy it is for the passing days to become a blur, one day blending in with another. So before all the memories are tucked away, let us pause and remember again the moments that come to mind – perhaps they are moments of laughter and joy, or tears and sorrow and disappointment, perhaps they are moments of gratitude or wonder or the work of forgiveness...

What has been happening in your days?

The waxing of the moon tells us Good Friday and Easter is not far off! These important markers of Christianity, are hand in hand with Passover, the Jewish Festival that recalls the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt – the story found in the Old

Testament book of Exodus. With lots of pilgrims heading to Jerusalem for Passover, the increasing moon light meant the nights were not as dark.

Next week is Palm Sunday and then begins Holy Week that ends in Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Lenten Learning #4

In the Lenten learning, we continue the conversation about pandemics in the past and what has come out of them.

Kathy: For thousands of years the small pox virus devastated populations and wiped out whole civilizations. This is really something that our generation has seen the eradication of small pox through the vaccination process. In the conversation I asked Dr. Jim if there has been success with other diseases?

This is his reply.

Dr. Jim: We have seen success or limited success in many ways. Diseases have been controlled world-wide where immunization has been available/affordable. Even though $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million people still die from HIV Aids each year., it has been greatly reduced. E-Boli has been reduced to sporadic outbreaks, though it still kills 50% of those who get infected. Polio has been effectively irradiated in much of the world through global vaccinations. The arrival of antibiotics have enormously reduced death in bacterial infections. Antibiotics have been real life-savers for millions of people.

Did you know, antibiotics have been used for millennia to treat infections, they just didn't know how it worked. The ancient Egyptians, applied moldy bread to infected wounds. With the aid of the microscope, by the late 1800's scientists began to observe antibacterial chemicals in action. The major event in the history of antibiotics was the discovery of [penicillin](#) by [Alexander Fleming](#) in 1928. Antibiotics revolutionized medicine during the later half of the 20th century. In fact, in our life-time - between 1944 and 1972 human life expectancy jumped by **eight** years, largely due to the introduction of antibiotics. https://timelines.issarice.com/wiki/Timeline_of_antibiotics

In summary: Because of the microscope, there has been great advancement in treating diseases – the acceptance of vaccinations world-wide and development of antibiotics. Even in this modern age pandemic not everybody is accepting of vaccination. Only 56 % of the staff at a long term care home in Grey-Bruce were willing to get vaccinated at this point.

Along with treating disease, there has been great advancement in understanding the cause and spread of diseases leading to public health measures of proper sewage disposal and clean drinking water. And where would we be in this time without the public health measures of hand washing/ sanitizing, face masks, physical distancing, not traveling? All these measures are important steps in preventing the spread of Covid 19 and its variants.

Let us stand as able and hum along with Jean as she leads us in the song...

Song: # 196 Throughout these Lenten days and nights (tune #126 - Ride on ride on in...)

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. We bear the silence, cross and pain of human burdens, human strife, and though the road is hard and steep the Spirit ever calls us on.
4. So let us choose the path of one who wore, for us, the crown of **thorns** and slept in death that we might wake to life on Resurrection Morn!
5. Rejoice, O sons and daughters! Sing and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings, on Easter day will live again.

As we come to this time of hearing Holy Scripture read and interpreted, let us seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray together saying,

Prayer of Illumination: Psalm 25:5

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

Responsive Reading: Psalm 51:1-12

The responsive reading is a prayer of a most intense kind. It is the prayer of the once shepherd boy, now King David. After some nine months, the gig is up. All is laid bare: the willful taking of another man's wife, the intentional plotting of evil, murder made to look like a battle fatality. It is one ugly mess. The story is all there in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel chapter 11. In Chapter 12, the gig is up. The truth laid bare. The deception is over. And David prays.

In his prayer, we will hear the petition: have mercy on me, blot out my transgression – in other words, blot out my willful rebellion, wash me from my iniquity – a fancy word that means intentional plotting to do evil and then carrying through with it. There is the plea: cleanse me from my sin – all the things that miss the mark and fall short of God's glory, all the deeds we do – and don't do, the words we say and fail to say that cause harm to the self, others, and even creation. He goes on to implore God to: teach me, create in me, put a new and right spirit in me, restore to me, sustain in me...

What catches my attention is David's humility; he simply cannot save himself from the mess and longs for God to act in his life.

Let us pray as we read responsively Psalm 51:1-12.

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
- ² **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.**
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- ⁴ **Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.**
- ⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ **You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**
- ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ **Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.
- ¹⁰ **Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**
- ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
- ¹² **Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

Who prays a prayer like this? It can only be one who deeply trusts in the mercy of God; one who recognizes their helplessness and need for Keeper to act in their lives for well-being.

And now another story.

The Old Testament Reading: Genesis 3:1-21

Genesis chapter 2 ends with the man and his wife in the garden of Eden – they were both naked and were not ashamed.

Listen for the word of God.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of

the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.”⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,^[a] knowing good and evil.” ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

⁸They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” ¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals
and among all wild creatures;

upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶To the woman he said,

“I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷And to the man he said,

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you,

‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;
you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

²⁰The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

The word of God for us this day, thanks be to God.

Sermon: The Mess and Mercy

In Frederick Buechner's book, *Whistling in the Dark*, there is a chapter titled, Psychotherapy. He writes, "After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God came strolling through the cool of the day and asked them two questions: "Where are you?" and "What is this that you have done?" Psychotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and the like have been asking the same ones ever since.

"Where are you?" lays bare the present. They are in hiding, that's where they are. What is it they want to hide? From whom do they want to hide it? What does it cost them to hide it? Why are they so unhappy with things as they are that they are trying to conceal it from the world by hiding, and from themselves by covering their nakedness with aprons?

The question, "What is this that you have done?" lays bare the past. What did they do to get this way? What did they hope would happen by doing it? What did they fear would happen? What did the serpent do? What was it that made them so ashamed?"

What a mess they are in, calling out from behind the bushes; Adam blaming Eve, Eve blaming the serpent, neither of them able to fess up and take responsibility for their actions.

In the next verses, "God is described as cursing them, but in view of the Maker's actions at the end of the story and right on through the end of the New Testament, it seems less a matter of vindictively inflicting them with the consequences. It is more a matter of honestly confronting them with the consequences. Because of who they are and what they have done, this is the result. There is no undoing it. There is no going back to the garden." What a mess they are in, the consequences of their actions bringing them to this place.

I have often wondered what would have happened if, instead of hiding after their eyes were opened to good and evil, Adam and Eve had stepped out from behind the bushes and confessed their sorry state. How would this story be different if they had repented, turned from hiding, and returned to the Maker, turned from blaming and turned toward taking responsibility, how would this whole mess have turned out differently.

In light of David's prayer in Psalm 51 it occurs to me, though their eyes were opened to good and evil Adam and Eve did not yet know the mercy of the Maker. Is it possible to take responsibility for our sin if we have no sense of mercy? Is this why David can lay bare his heart and confess his sin – because he deeply trusts in the goodness and mercy of the Keeper following him all the days of his life?"

The confronting of Adam and Eve with the consequences of what they have done is not the end of the story.

At the end of the story comes the most moving part. The same hands that stooped down to formed the man from dust and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, these same hands stitch together garments of skins and clothes them. “They can't go back, but they can go forward clothed in a new way—clothed, that is, not in the sense of having their old defenses again, behind which to hide who they are and what they have done, but clothed in the sense of having a new understanding of who they are and a new strength to draw on, for what lies before them...”

The mercy of God comes looking for us, will not leave us in the messes we find ourselves. The Bible is full of stories of imperfect people who make shockingly bad choices and yet still find themselves pursued by God. ¹ “Where are you? What is this you have done?” are good questions for us too when we find ourselves in a mess that leaves us restless and hiding behind blaming, denying, projecting, rationalizing, anything to protect the fragile ego. As undoing as truth can be, it is safe to come out of hiding. Mercy awaits. It is okay to be less than perfect. It is the only way to well-being that gives way to well-doing.

Amen.

RESPOND TO THE WORD

Silent Reflection and Prayer of Confession

WE come,

Not because we have made peace this day.

Not because we have treated the other as our self.

Not because we have walked the earth with reverence.

We come because there is mercy,

because there is grace,

because your Spirit has not been taken from us,

we come still thirsting for peace,

still loving to love,

still hungering for wholeness.²

One: ... so we pray

All: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy

Lord Jesus, grant us your peace.

Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

¹ Philip Yancey, *Vanishing Grace*

² Philip Newell, *Praying with the Earth Prayer Book*.

Jesus said, “Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”
 Peace and forgiveness are God’s gifts to us this day. Thanks be to God.
 Let us continue in prayer as we sing God this next song, God you touch the earth with
 beauty...

Song: # 667 God, you touch earth with beauty – remain seated to sing...

1. God, you touch the earth with beauty; make my heart anew;
 with your Spirit recreate me, pure and strong and true.
2. Like your springs and running waters, make me crystal pure;
 like your rocks of towering grandeur, make me strong and sure.
3. Like your dancing waves in sunlight, make me glad and free;
 like the straightness of the pine trees, upright let me be.
4. Like the arching of the heavens, lift my thoughts above;
 turn my dreams to noble action, ministries of love.
5. God, you touch the earth with beauty; make my heart anew;
 keep me ever by your Spirit pure and strong and true. Amen.

Offering Invitation

You have heard it said before,
 There was a man, some called him mad
 But the more he gave, the more he had.

The plates are placed at the back doors to receive our offering this day.

Prayer of Dedication, Thanksgiving and Intercession, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer.
 Let us pray.

Generous and gracious O God, you give and give and give and give. It is your very
 nature. And made in your image, we give too trusting in your provision of all that is
 needed.

God of steadfast love,
 in the midst of unending change and challenge, joys and sorrows,
 we give you thanks for your presence grounding us, sustaining us, working in us.
 We give thanks that you hear our prayers and are merciful and gracious, slow to anger,
 abounding in steadfast love.
 We give thanks for the gift of this new day and the opportunity to gather as church.
 We pray your protection as we make our way into the days ahead.

In this moment of silence we lift up to you those situations and persons who lay heavy on our hearts...

We pray for the well-being of the elderly who once sat among us who are now in places of assistance and care: Fred & Peggy, Mary, Roeli, Isabel, Eldie, Shirley, Irene, and Liz. May Gerald know your company as he adapts to his new dwelling place.

We pray your graces of healing and strength for Henk and Lois and Nancy and George. WE pray calm for Laura.

Send your healing Spirit to people we know and the earth you love.

We remember before you

friends in grief...

relationships marked by tension...

those facing difficulty at work or finding work...

those waiting and watching in loneliness and fear...

concerns about the environment...

We pray for the continuing ministry of the church in our neighbourhoods and around the world.

We pray for our church and this season of electing new elders.

We pray in your name Jesus, in 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 Hymn: # 726 May the God of hope go with us every day

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all;
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Benediction

One: In work or in worship

All: God is with us

One: Gathered or scattered

All: God is with us

One: Now and always

All: 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.

Announcements:

Sunday March 28 is Psalm/Passion Sunday. The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated.

Lectionary Readings for March 28

Liturgy of the Palms: Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29; Mark 11:1–11 *OR* John 12:12–16

Liturgy of the Passion: Isaiah 50:4–9a; Psalm 31:9–16, Philippians 2:5–11

Mark 14:1-15:47 *OR* Mark 15:1-39

Moment for Mission -

Summer Student's Virtual Ministry

Presbyterians Sharing provides financial assistance for seminary students to gain ministry experience by serving in rural and remote congregations across the country. Last summer, Samuel Andri, a student from the Vancouver School of Theology, served in the Synod of Saskatchewan. Due to COVID-19, Samuel led online worship and helped deliver a Vacation Bible School program virtually. Though his responsibilities were fulfilled online instead of in person, it did not make his experience any less meaningful. When asked about his summer experience, Samuel said, "I am forever grateful for the opportunity to reflect on what it means to serve God in more rural areas of Canada and to reflect on the beauty of serving God in a more close-knit community even through online platforms."

Women Farmers Ensure Food Security

In the village of Mwenitanga in Malawi, Twambilire inspected the soil that lay beneath the layers of flimsy husks on her plot of land.

Twambilire had witnessed the effects of climate change on her farm in the frequency and severity of both droughts and rain—events that make it difficult for her to grow enough food to eat and sell at the market.

One day, Twambilire decided to sign up for a PWS&D-supported program teaching conservation agriculture. At the workshop, she learned to farm in a way that encourages crop rotation, organic fertilizers and minimal soil disturbance.

Twambilire proudly shares that since mulching her plot and implementing what she had learned, her once-degraded soil is now fertile and healthy. She has also become a lead farmer with the PWS&D project, teaching other farmers in her community about conservation agriculture.

This Lenten season faithfully respond with PWS&D as we help farmers adapt to climate change so that they can increase their yields and improve nutrition for their families.

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