

**EXETER UNITED CHURCH**

**22 March 2020**

**4th Sunday of Lent**

*Open Arms, Open Hearts, Open Spirit  
Welcome to Worship!*

**Preparing to Gather** – *For this time of worship, consider finding a quiet space to be. You may consider playing soft music and lighting a candle to focus your time.*

**Words of Welcome** – *Welcome to this new time and way of worship. Know that you are being held in prayer by others in the congregation who are moving through this worship too. Know that I am praying for each of you as well! Rev. Laurie*

**God Invites Us to Gather**

**Call to Gather**

Our walk through this Lenten time has paused for a moment as we gather in worship – on this Sunday morning – another little Easter. Welcome to this time, as we draw together in the presence of the One who knows us and names us and who calls us to this community.

**Centering Hymn (MV#4)**

All who are thirsty, all who are weak,  
come to the fountain.

Dip your heart in the stream of life.

Let the pain and the sorrow  
be washed away  
in the waves of his mercy  
as deep cries out to deep.

We sing

Come, Lord Jesus, come. (2x)

Holy Spirit come. (2x)

*[Read/sing the words to this hymn silently or out loud.*

*Allow them to be present with you.]*

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

**Lenten Candle Liturgy**

Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent. Lent is a time to think about the things that block us from following God's way of loving and caring for this world and one another. Today, the fourth Lenten candle represents pride.

Let us pray in silence for God to remove any pride within us and in our world that makes us feel more important than others and stops us from asking for God's help when we need it.

*Silent prayer and reflection.*

Knowing that God accepts us for who we are, but loves us into who we can be, let us sing:

**(MV#85) Take, O take me as I am;  
Summon out what I shall be;  
Set your seal upon my heart and live in me.**

*[Read these words silently or out loud. Allow them to be present with you.]*

### **Opening Prayer**

In the beauty of this place, we come to pray, to worship, and to receive healing and hope. We come from the struggles and triumphs of the week, needing to feel the soothing presence of God. Lord God, be with us today. Calm and soothe our souls. We rejoice in this special place you have provided for us, where we gather to talk of your presence and your love, to sing your praises and to be empowered to go forth to serve our community. Amen.

### **God Invites Us to Explore ...**

### **HYMN VU#345 Come, Children, Join to Sing**

Come, children, join to sing: Hallelujah!  
Praise to our Servant King: Hallelujah!  
Let all with heart and voice,  
saved by God's gracious choice,  
now in this place rejoice: Hallelujah!

Come, lift your hearts on high: Hallelujah!  
Let praises fill the sky: Hallelujah!  
Christ calls his people friends,  
the helpless he defends,  
a love that never ends: Hallelujah!

*[Read/sing the words to this hymn silently or out loud. Allow them to be present with you.]*

### **Learning with God's Children**

#### **'Praying with Jesus'**

#### **Symbol - Cross**

#### **Jesus Prays Before His Arrest**

Before Easter, there was Good Friday, the crucifixion.

Before the crucifixion, there was the arrest of Jesus.

Before the arrest of Jesus, Jesus goes to pray.

He knows what is to come and requires the strength and connection that comes with prayer.

He, also, asks his friends to come and pray with him, but they keep falling asleep.

Read Mark 14: 32-41 - *Jesus Prays in Gethsemane*

<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup> He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. <sup>34</sup> And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." <sup>35</sup> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." <sup>37</sup> He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? <sup>38</sup> Keep awake and pray that you may not

come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”<sup>39</sup> And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.<sup>40</sup> And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.<sup>41</sup> He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

I wonder how things seem, things we are very afraid to face or do, if we went to prayer for strength and connection?

When do you like to pray alone?

When do you like praying in a group?

When do you like praying in a community?

What do you like about each of them?

What do you not like about each of them?

As you focus on the cross, name one emotion Jesus was probably feeling and say a prayer asking God to be with you when you feel those feelings.

Sit in quiet with your eyes closed, letting God’s presence be with you.

### **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, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **HYMN VU#345 Come, Children Join to Sing**

Come, lift your hearts on high: Hallelujah!

Let praises fill the sky: Hallelujah!

Christ calls his people friends,  
the helpless he defends,  
a love that never ends: Hallelujah!

Praise yet our Christ again: Hallelujah!

Raise high the joyous strain: Hallelujah!

The whole creation o’er  
let all God’s love adore,

singing for evermore: Hallelujah!

*[Read/sing the words to this hymn silently or out loud. Allow them to be present with you.]*

### **Preparing to Listen for God’s Word**

Prepare our minds and hearts, Holy One, to be present to you and your Word. Silence in us the chatter in our minds. Open our hearts so that we may experience the flow of your love to us in this time and this place. Amen.

## **Genesis 1:24 - 26**

<sup>24</sup> And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. <sup>25</sup> God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

## **Luke 22:24 - 27**

### **The Dispute about Greatness**

<sup>24</sup> A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. <sup>25</sup> But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

### **Reflection**

*to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,*

*First, read each scripture passage and see what words speak to you the most.*

*Read each scripture passage a second time and see what more may jump out to you.*

*Consider the scripture passages in relation to the two phrases from 'A New Creed'. How do you see scripture speaking to this?*

*How is scripture affirming 'to live with respect in Creation'? and 'to love and serve others'?*

*At the end of your personal reflection time speak directly to the Creator about what is on your heart.*

## **God Sends Us Out to Live the Call ...**

### **Invitation to Offering**

Is it worth giving for the life of faith,

**giving money, giving our talents, and giving our time?**

We look at the cross and we see on it not just Jesus, but so many committed women and men who have suffered and died for their faithfulness,

**and we know these gifts will be blessed if we offer our lifetime of gifts with Christ-filled generosity,**

Let us give the offerings of our hearts and lives.

### **\*OFFERTORY HYMN VU#538**

For the gift of creation,

the gift of your love,

and the gift of the Spirit by which we live,

we thank you

and give you the fruit of our hands.

May your grace be proclaimed

by the gifts that we give.  
*[Read/sing the words to this hymn silently or out loud.  
Allow them to be present with you.]*

*During this time, you may consider setting up a jar or other container for your offering as a tangible symbol of faithfulness.*

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Receive these gifts that we have given, Creator God, as a symbol of all that we seek to be and to do in your way. Bless what we have offered and direct us in the use of these offerings for your glory and for the well-being of all. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **Prayer of Confession**

During the season of Lent, we focus, in part, on our relationship with God. Confession is one of our relational avenues for turning back to God. Confession is the means by which we look deeply inside to discover the ways love has been blocked by our self-interests. Confession is our way of opening our heart unreservedly to God. Let us invite God's healing love to soften our hearts, opening the way for wholeness.

Let us pray .....

Holy Lord, we approach you again in worship seeking your wisdom.

We come to church to be directed and redirected by you.

Remind us again that we do not live to serve ourselves.

We are created in the image of God, to be a blessing to this world in every way.

Be our true north.

Like a GPS that maps out our best route, alerting us at every crossroad, direct us.

Give us the wisdom to turn to your will and to do U-turns, when necessary.

Oh, how lost we sometimes are, when we are harsh with others, quick to judge, or stiff and stubborn. Help us to live your love, expecting that others are offering their best, giving the benefit of the doubt, and being forgiving. Love us, O Lord. Help us to follow your pathway of love and your highway of compassion. Amen.

### **HYMN VU#242 Let All Things Now Living**

Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving  
to God our Creator triumphantly raise;  
who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,  
by guiding us on to the end of our days.  
God's banners are o'er us, pure light goes before us,  
a pillar of fire shining forth in the night;  
till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,  
as forward we travel from light into Light.

By law God enforces, the stars in their courses  
and sun in its orbit obediently shine;  
the hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,  
the depths of the ocean proclaim God divine.  
We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing;  
with glad adoration a song let us raise:  
till all things now living unite in thanksgiving,  
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise.

*[Read/sing the words to this hymn silently or out loud. Allow them to be present with you.]*

***Blessing & Sending Out***

As we travel on this Lenten journey,  
**we know that God leads and guides us.**

As we travel on this Lenten journey,  
**we notice the words of Jesus making choices for life.**

As we travel on this Lenten journey,  
**we dream and work with the Spirit for a world where peace and harmony are restored. We leave this place in peace, going in the love of God. Amen.**

***"Go Out and Serve Him"***

Filled with the Spirit,  
filled with God's grace,  
filled with the friendship  
we find in this place;  
called as disciples, go now in faith.  
Jesus will show the way.  
Go out and serve Him, serve Him.  
Carry His word into all of the world.  
Go and serve Him, serve Him.  
Go out and serve our Lord.  
Go serve our Lord.

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***Micah 6:8: You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.***