

Order of Worship
Kensington Presbyterian
2022-03-06
First Sunday in Lent

Welcome and Land Acknowledgment

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

I am speaking from the unceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, who are the traditional caretakers of this island

Announcements

Annual meeting on March 20th

Lighting of the Candle – A Litany

In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

La lumière brille dans les ténèbres, et les ténèbres ne l'ont pas accueillie.

Jésus dit : Je suis la lumière du monde ; celui qui me suit ne marchera pas dans les ténèbres, mais il aura la lumière de la vie.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Jésus Christ est la lumière du monde.



Call to worship

The Lord is good, he watches over us with love and mercy

We abide in his Holy Spirit, let us rejoice!

Let us see the Lord's righteousness in worship,

As we place our trust in Him, let us give thanks!

The Lord grants us refuge in his perfect presence,

Nothing can separate us from the Lord our God!

So let us praise God this day and always,

With all of our thankful hearts, let us say Hallelujah!

Hymn: #204 "Thou didst leave thy throne"

Prayer of Approach

Most Holy God, we come before you, gathered together as a community of faith, rejoicing in your grace and mercy which has given us every gift in this beautiful creation of yours. You make all life complete, in our living and in our loving. We praise you for your perfect love for us, revealing to us your presence in the word, in your only son Jesus Christ, and in the work of the Holy Spirit. In your guidance and strength, you lead us to love you with all of our hearts, and to love one another. You intimately work in our lives; you care for us on a level we could never comprehend. We give you thanks for the work that you do in creation, and for the blessings in our lives. You have given us the ability to love, to forgive, and to praise your most precious name.

We confess that we often fall short of your divine will. In the things we do and the things we don't do, we have neglected your calling for us and instead turn to those earthly powers which run deeply within us. We failed to trust in you, and we have become empty to the promises of the world. We seek your love, your forgiveness, in all of the failures that we have committed in your sight. Help us to praise and worship your name, work in our lives to transform us through the resurrection of your son Jesus Christ, given freely to us for the salvation of our sins. Grant within us clean hearts filled with your perfect love so that we may be inspired to love you and one another in our lives. This we pray in your most holy name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God has given us the Good News of the Gospel. He has gifted us with salvation through his son Jesus Christ. The old grip of sin has been transformed into new life through the death and resurrection. Know that you are forgiven and through Christ, we are called to forgive one another. Praise be to God. Amen.

Hymn #199 "If I have been the source of pain"

Prayer for Illumination

Gracious God, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth. Make us hungry for this heavenly food, that it may nourish us today in the ways of eternal life, through Jesus Christ, the bread of heaven. Amen.

Readings – Lectionary Year C, First Sunday in Lent

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalms 91 (sung: Hymn #57 “You who dwell in the shelter / On Eagle’s Wings”)

Luke 4:1-13

Sermon: “Remembering”

I will always remember the late Professor Ellen Aitken; She was the last Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill – the Faculty is now a School. One of Professor Aitken’s interests was the formation of the early church in the apostolic age. I remember her saying that the Christian worship service is a series of repeated or liturgical actions that brings us to a place of remembrance – the “who we are” before the “who God is.” And so it is.

When we light the candle, we remind ourselves that Jesus is the Light of the world.

When we stand during worship, we remind ourselves that we have an attitude of reverence towards God.

When we open the Bible to proclaim the words therein, we are reminded that God himself speaks through the written word.

When together we raise our voices in song, it is a reminder that one day we will be among the great multitude who will cry out before God: “Hallelujah! For the Lord God the Almighty reigns.”

When we gather for Communion, like we will do this morning, it is a reminder that Jesus himself is in fellowship with us, the One who died and rose again from the tomb, our Saviour and Lord.

When the minister raises his or her hands while giving the benediction, it is a reminder that Jesus himself did so when he blessed his disciples before he parted from them and ascended to heaven.

There are times, however, when remembrance escapes us – we sometimes forget why we do what we do.

So, we begin by reminding ourselves why the Season in Lent goes for forty days. (To be clear: The word “Lent” itself has little if any Christian roots. Strictly speaking, it means “springtime” from the Old English, or “lengthening of the day” from its West Germanic origins.)

So, the forty days – what is it?

Immediately after Jesus was baptized by John, and before he began his public ministry, the Spirit led him to the wilderness where for forty days with no food he was subjected to temptation by the devil. The forty days in Lent reminds us of this.

The practice of abstinence during Lent is evidently a reminder of the forty days of fasting in the wilderness. I suggest to you that perhaps this year, over and above temporarily depriving ourselves of sweet desserts and other pleasurable activities, that we also turn our attention to the implications of the three temptations.

The three temptations the Enemy put to Jesus remind us that expediency must never overrule the way or the path God has set before us.

If Jesus had turned stone into bread, he would have affirmed that satisfying physical wants or desires takes precedence over seeking a closer connection with God. Jesus said “no” to the Enemy.

If Jesus had agreed to worship the devil in exchange for the kingdoms of the earth, he would have affirmed the path of compromise, reaching end points that miss the mark, that is, possession of the world instead of reconciliation of the world to God. Jesus said “no” to the Enemy.

Performing spectacular superhuman feats would have shown that Jesus was willing to short-circuit the process by which he would be recognized as the Son of God. Jesus said “no” to the Enemy.

Lent reminds us of the suffering of Christ. Let us also remind ourselves that the forty-day connection to the wilderness temptations reminds us that developing a close connection with God through the discipline of Scripture reading is better than the mere satisfaction of physical desires. Second, it reminds us that it is always best to keep our focus on the path God has set before us, rejecting ways that seem to offer faster rewards that in the end miss the mark. Third, it reminds us of our position before God. Let us beware of buying into the idea that we can control God. We are followers of God, not the other way around.

Then there is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. What is it?

Ash Wednesday came down to us from a practice formalized in the 4th century at Nicaea. Those who had been excommunicated and who then asked to be restored to the Church were made to wear sackcloth. They were then sprinkled with ashes in a public display of penance. Sackcloth and ashes do have a connection in the Bible. Sackcloth and ashes signify extreme sorrow: think of Jacob when his sons told him his favourite son was killed; think of Mordecai when he learned that Haman plotted to exterminate the Jews; think of Job when he sat down on ashes and with a broken piece of pottery scraped away at his sores. Today, Ash Wednesday, the stylized smudgeon the forehead is a reminder of the need for penitence.

If there is anything that I find amusing and out of character with Lent is the day before Ash Wednesday: Shrove Tuesday.

Today we understand “Shrove Tuesday” as pancake day. On that day, we eat pancakes with all the trimmings. Essentially, “Mardi Gras” is a more extravagant version of Shrove Tuesday.

The word “shrove” came down to us from the now archaic “shrive.” To “shrive” means to confess sins to a priest or for a priest to hear a confession and assign a penance.

Eventually, Shrive or Shrove Tuesday became a day when we eat up all the food forbidden during Lent, so these don’t go to waste. Thus, pancakes became traditional on Shrove Tuesday, because they are made of eggs, sugar, and fat – all to be put aside in the 40 days of Lent. I don’t know if Shrove Tuesday as practiced today is supposed to remind us of anything except perhaps the need not to waste any food one is not allowed to eat during the forty days in Lent.

We will of course remember that the forty days in Lent leads to the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church in the early centuries set the day we celebrate the Resurrection, or Easter, on the Sunday after the Passover Full Moon. This year, it is April 17th. If you wish, count the 40 days backward from April 17th excluding Sundays and you will get to the date of this year’s Ash Wednesday, March 2nd the beginning of Lent.

Our Old Testament reading looks forward to the Resurrection, set in the framework of the offering of the first fruits of the land. The name of the book itself, Deuteronomy, is a retelling of the deliverance from Egypt, of the Law. “Deutero” means second, and “nomy” means structure – the Law. Our reading is a remembrance – a retelling of salvation history, one that we will again recall at Communion in the Great Prayer of thanksgiving. For the Israelites, it was journey from slavery to freedom, from the oppression in Egypt, to a land flowing with milk and honey across the Jordan. For us it is a redemption from slavery to sin to freedom in Christ. Whereas before we were in Christ our bare human nature compelled us to do things our own way – recall the temptations – when Christ redeemed us by his death on the cross, by his resurrection he freed us from the imprisonment of bare human nature and showed us the freedom and ability to follow the way of God. We gained the freedom to choose either to remain imprisoned in our bare human nature, or to cross into the promised land so to speak to fully enjoy life according to what God created us to be.

We fast forward to the Apostle Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians reminding them of the significance of what Christ did. Regarding the first fruits, he wrote this:

“But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made

alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

Biblical text is a retrospective: it calls us to remember that we are God’s children, precious in God’s sight, loved enough that Christ suffered and died for our sake. Biblical text is more than a recollection: it also looks forward to when all of creation will be reconciled to God in perfection. In the same way, as the Professor Ellen Aitken once observed: what we do in this space points us to God, reminding us of who we are and who God is. And similarly to the way Biblical text looks forward, in Communion, we are also reminded that we anticipate the fulness of time when God will be present with us face to face.

Jesus said: “...many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

To the Triune God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and praise.



Communion hymn #546 “Here is bread; Here is wine”

Apostles’ Creed (Book of Praise #539)

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.

Invitation to the Table

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

This is the table of the Lord. All in Christ are welcome. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. *And also with you.*

Lift up your hearts. *We lift them to the Lord.*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

It is truly right and our greatest joy to give you thanks and praise,

O God our creator and redeemer. In your wisdom, you made all things and sustain them by your power.

You formed us in your image to love and serve you, but we forgot your promises and abandoned your commandments. In your mercy, you did not reject us but still claimed us as your own.

When we were slaves in Egypt you freed us and led us through the waters of the sea. On the holy mountain you gave us your law to guide us in your way. Through the waters of Jordan, you led us into the land of your promise, and you sustained us in times of trial.

You spoke through prophets calling us to turn from our willful ways to new obedience and righteousness.

You sent your only Son to be the way to eternal life.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. He took upon himself the weight of our sin and carried the burden of our guilt. He shared our life in every way, and though tempted, was sinless to the end. Baptized as your own, he went willingly to his death and by your power was raised to new life. In his dying and rising, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

We give you thanks that the Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying:

This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Remembering all your mighty and merciful acts, we take this bread and this wine from the gifts you have given us and celebrate with joy the redemption won for us in Jesus Christ.

Accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as a living and holy offering of ourselves, that our lives may proclaim the One crucified and risen.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again!

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ, and with all who are baptized in his name, that we may be one in ministry in every place.

As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.

Merciful God we pray for the crisis in Ukraine.

We pray for those who are suffering and in danger, who live in fear and anxiety, who fear what tomorrow will bring, who are anxious for their lives and the lives of those they love and care for, and who mourn the dead.

We pray that those with power over war will lay down weapons, and that those who have power to accomplish peace will have wisdom and compassion.

Triune God, sustain the hope of all those who seek justice and peace and inspire the leaders of nations to do what is right.

Give us strength to serve you faithfully until the promised day of resurrection, when with the redeemed of all the ages we will feast with you at your table in glory.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen.

In the language with which we are most comfortable, together let us pray that which the Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples to say:

Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Donne-nous aujourd'hui notre pain de ce jour: pardonne-nous nos offenses, comme nous pardonnons aussi à ceux qui nous ont offensés: Et ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation, mais délivre-nous du mal.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

The Communion

When we break bread with each other, it is a sharing in the body of Christ.

When together we bless the cup, it is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

Prayer

We thank you, God, for bringing us to this day, with all its promise for days yet to come. Lead us into our future with a strong sense of hope, that where you are, we may be also, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Closing Hymn #556 "Now let us from this table rise"

Sending & Benediction

Go out into the world in peace.

have courage; hold on to what is good.

return no one evil for evil.

strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, and help the suffering.

love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the strength and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever.

Amen.

