

### **March 14, 2021 – Email/At Home Missal**

A blessed Fourth Sunday of Lent to you, and thank you for joining us for worship, whether by print, email or Zoom. For the season of Lent, we are working with a combination of stories/articles and scriptures, and our services invite you into a reflective mode. In today's teaching, we ask some questions and there is opportunity for conversation on the first two stories, article and scriptures ☺ We will also record the discussion from Zoom on the stories, and post it to our YouTube channel later in the week.

This week, you will receive the third story with scripture (*George in the Garage*). On March 21<sup>st</sup>, our AGM Sunday, we will skip story work in favour of a more "traditional" Zoom service. On March 28<sup>th</sup> (Palm Sunday we will study on "*George in the Garage*", and you will receive "*Sheldon Seeks Sanctuary*"). Our Easter Sunday service will focus on teaching around the final story ☺

For those who are voting members at St Peter's, a reminder that our AGM will be held by Zoom (with mail-in ballot vote for those who are unable to connect by Zoom) on March 21<sup>st</sup> following worship. Based on our current Red Zone status, council advises with regret, no in-person option will be available for our AGM. We want everyone who will connect by Zoom to be able to participate and vote, so on March 14<sup>th</sup>, we will work some training into our in-worship study time on Sundays.

*"A voting member is one who has been confirmed in this congregation, or received by adult baptism, or received by transfer as confirmed members from another Lutheran congregation or another congregation in full communion with the ELCIC, or received by affirmation of faith as baptized adults. Voting members must have received Holy Communion and have made a contribution of record within the current or preceding calendar year."*

#### **Our scheduled Zoom meeting for St Peter's Sunday Worship**

**March 14 2021: 09:45 AM America/Toronto**

Click here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82709511336?pwd=MW9IM3RZOTITTmtlVklVU0ZWYlIjZz09>

**Meeting ID: 827 0951 1336    Passcode: 269826**

**You don't have to have a computer or internet to connect to any of the Zoom services; you can also just call in on one of these numbers (long distance charges may apply):**

1 587 328 1099 or  
1 647 374 4685 or  
1 647 558 0588 or  
1 778 907 2071 or  
1 204 272 7920 or  
1 438 809 7799

As we proceed through Lent, doorway and walking visits, telephone/video call visits and delivery of home communion kits including a dining table liturgy remain available. Please contact the church office if you would like any of these ☺ Keep safe and love each other.

With love, in Christ  
Pastor Janaki.

#### **Other Lenten Study offerings which we have been invited to join include:**

**Sunday afternoon - BOOK STUDY:** "With: Re-imaging the Way You Relate to God" by Skye Jethani" with friends from St Luke's Anglican, led by Rev Steve Greene. This Sunday, the study covers Chapters 6 & 7.

**Time: Mar 14, 2021 01:30 PM America/Toronto**

**Join Zoom Meeting:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85422636301?pwd=U0xZYU9heUx5OHZiSHFhOE1rTitqUT09>

**Meeting ID: 854 2263 6301    Passcode: 852120**

**Wednesday night study at 7:00pm** – hosted by Peace Lutheran Church, Pickering taught by Rev. David Maginley for a 5 week Lenten wilderness journey. This week, the group will study **Redemption Redeemed**. What is it to not only

believe in Christ, but believe into Christ? Explore what it is to be a warrior of compassion, as a partner with Christ in restoring the world.

**Time: March 17, 7:00pm**

**Meeting ID: 860 3939 7546**

**Passcode: 318076**

**Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86039397546?pwd=SkJiV1J2azNoVjZKZDRXZjRWHg3QT09>**

### **OPENING OURSELVES TO GOD'S GENEROSITY**

Blessed be Creator: Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Whose abundant forgiveness and grace surround us – always available  
Welcoming us back from dark and unforgiving places. **Amen**

*Brief silence is kept for SILENT PRAYER & reflection*

Then, we pray ... Holy One:

**We know we have fallen short.**

**We turn our backs instead of facing each other.**

**We remain silent when we could speak.**

**We speak when we could listen.**

**We close the door when we could fling it wide open.**

**We judge when we could seek understanding.**

**We cling when we could give.**

**We use when we could refrain.**

**Forgive us, Holy One, for being so very human at times.**

**help us to continue to grow into your way:**

**The Way of Jesus. Amen.**

We hear the assurance of God's forgiveness:

Through Jesus, we are always welcomed back home with God

Who receives us with love, forgiving and renewing us every time we return.

When we dare to forgive and stop judging others, we open ourselves to God's generosity.

Our hearts are open and available for God's forgiveness

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Adapted from: <https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/prayer-of-confession>

### **Hymn of Welcome for Lent: God is Forgiveness**

**Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gR1g0UAY2II>**

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### **Greeting (for email/print delivery):**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

**Prayer of the Day:** Holy God, your 10 commandments and the laws you gave to Moses give us guidelines to live good lives. As followers of Jesus, we understand the precedence of Gospel over Law. Please help us, in our deepest heart-and-mind spaces, to live the Good News of Jesus' love, and refrain from judging others. Help us to be with each other, in love. Amen.

### **"Summary of the articles on Joe Hatch":**

New research has found it's cheaper for governments to house homeless people with mental illnesses rather than pay for the problems associated with homelessness — including health care, policing and temporary shelters. In the largest research study in the world targeting homelessness and mental health, the Mental Health Commission of Canada used a federal grant to see if a "housing first" approach to homelessness and mental illness was a good way of transitioning people off of the streets. Essentially, the program, dubbed At Home, found housing for the homeless and mentally ill.

Winnipeg's Joe Hatch was one of them. Hatch, who has a B.A. in sociology, was working at the University of Winnipeg in the late 1990s when he began to experience panic attacks. He was incorrectly diagnosed with anxiety, and prescribed the wrong medication. He began a 12-year downward spiral. Losing both his marriage and his job, Hatch was eventually obliged to move out of his apartment. He landed on a friend's couch, and eventually ended up on the street. From the street he wound up in jail.

Being in jail led to a stint in a psychiatric hospital. There, he received a new diagnosis – bipolar disorder. And with the new diagnosis, new medication. Since then, life has been steadily improving for Hatch. His biggest break was getting a chance to participate in the At Home study. Through the study, Hatch found housing in 2010 and, eventually, work.

Now, two years on, he's a Peer Organizer with the study and does research for the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies.

Joe Hatch is living proof that housing the homeless and mentally ill can have life-giving outcomes.

**Gospel Acclamation: Take, O, Take Me As I Am ELW 814**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mf3QHqQ-004>

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**The Holy Gospel according to John 8:2-11**

**C: Glory to you O Lord**

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

This is the Gospel of our Lord **C: Praise to you O Christ**

**Message (Imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here 😊) Who shall we judge?**

I wonder how many of you have ever taken a day when you try, from the moment of your waking to the moment of your falling asleep at night, to notice (not to prevent, but just to notice) each time you judge someone or think a judgy thought.

For myself, in some ways I think pandemic life has increased my tendency to be judgy, and one of my greatest places of transgression is the supermarket. Now that most grocery stores have arrows or signs showing which way to go, my internal judge rises up strong and heavy when someone comes the wrong way down a grocery store aisle. The inner dialogue, especially if the aisle already has a few people in it, goes something like this:

"Well, I guess they didn't teach you how to follow arrows in school." It might be followed up by "I wonder how you did at reading and arithmetic."

If I am in a rush, or otherwise pressured my inner judge gets more prickly.

And then ... sometimes, when I am more focused on my grocery list that the arrows on the floor, I find myself going against the arrows ... and I am mortified that someone else is having that inner dialogue about me 😊

It seems almost part of our human genetic makeup to have a bit of a judgmental attitude inside of us, and that probably is not too far from the truth. We use our judgement to discern between safe and unsafe situations, and for self-preservation. But sometimes, that idea of self-preservation goes beyond the day-to-day survival things and lands

us in the areas that extend beyond our own survival, beyond our own safety, into the arena of possibly compromising or limiting the safety of others by our own attitudes.

How many of you know what the term NIMBY means?

It means Not in My Back Yard, and is very applicable, for example to the city of Cambridge, and the whole idea of locating a harm reduction, safe injection site somewhere in a downtown core ... people don't want that kind of thing ... Not in My Back Yard.

But that doesn't have to do so much with individual safety, now it has to do with property values, land values, business prosperity when "certain kinds of people" make this a place to hang out.

So far, I shared three stories with you ... two of them were fictional, but based on stories I have heard in real-life situations with real life people.

I told you the story of Treesey and Joe, two young adults who find themselves homeless and jobless at the beginning of COVID, now a year ago, and when there is no room in the shelter system, they find a home, where the residents don't use their attic. And one day while the couple are away, they get in through an unlocked door, and make their home in the attic.

I'd like to hear from you, two or three of you, responses to that story. How did you feel about the context they found themselves in, and the action they took?

Was there judgment in your mind? Was it based on right & wrong? Their trespass on private property?

Then, I told you the story of Susie, who came from a very abusive home, and when kicked out of her home is taken in by a much older man who also is abusive; he gets her using non-prescription drugs when she begins to decline in mental health under his abuse. Eventually she escapes him, but again, the shelter system is limited in how much it can help her. She pitches a tent on the banks of the Grand River for the winter (along with a few other women who find themselves in a similar situation).

I'd like to hear from you, two or three of you, responses to that story. How did you feel about the context they found themselves in, and the action they took?

Was there judgment in your mind? How did it compare to how you felt about Treesey & Joe?

Finally, we come to the story of Joe Hatch, which Jann read today, a true story of mental health struggle, incorrect diagnosis, leading to broken family, homelessness and incarceration. Joe is lucky though, he gets "rescued" if you will through the "at home" research project.

How did you feel about Joe's context & outcome? Was their judgment in your mind about his situation?

I take you back to how I began my meditation this morning ... our own very human tendency to judge is quite powerful, quite strong, and perhaps very much an instinct of self-preservation.

In the gospel story, Jesus is in a Jewish temple, teaching. The principles and literally the law of the Jewish faith are laid out in the Old Testament; scribes and Pharisees are those who know those laws extremely well, and they do not like Jesus' approach so they bring in a woman who has been caught in the act of adultery. (notice they bring in the woman, not the man). They cite Jewish law, in which this woman must be stoned they say. It is important to understand the context in which the law is given, and to understand that although this scripture might seem to cast question on Jewish law, it is in fact shared to highlight a key element of the gospel: the "judge not" element I call it.

So the scribes and the Pharisees they keep on questioning Jesus, trying to trap him. Jesus finally replies:

"Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

That line from Jesus puts the kybosh on any stoning. The scripture says "When they heard it, they went away, one by one". Finally, Jesus is left alone with the woman. And he has a conversation with the woman:

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, “No one, sir.”

And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

Now, let us think about that a little bit. Jesus himself doesn’t condemn her. And he tells her, from now on do not sin again ... but can any one of us really, from now on, not sin again? Heck, I can’t even get through the grocery store these days without sinning! Let alone encounter people whose lives and circumstances are so vastly different from my own without judging. We are all sinners. We all judge. And we all: you, me, Treesey, Joe, Susie, Joe Hatch, we all (whether Christians or not) cannot depend on ourselves to get us out of the dilemma of being sinful.

So where does our hope come from then? How can we ever imagine a Kingdom of God come down on earth, if we are all so woebegone? We rely upon God for that. God’s love. God’s grace. God’s forgiveness. And indeed God’s call to love.

Jesus models something very important when he stays, being the last one with the sinful woman. He stays. He remains WITH her. And he himself doesn’t judge her. His presence is, in and of itself redemptive. Just like how the “At Home” program, in and of itself provided redemption not just from the dilemma of homelessness, but from wrong diagnosis of mental health, from unemployment.

The “At Home” project demonstrated in a research environment how being WITH people helps them to find good ways through. Intrinsically though, such an approach requires the suspension of judgment. It requires us to also see people through the lens of presence, a non-judgmental presence that is willing to love. And if we do that, if we can muster our efforts towards loving like that, it is possible to suspend our inclination to judge in favour of being WITH.

Being WITH ....Walking WITH.

This is what Jesus did. Not condemn.

Maybe we can do likewise? Amen.

**Hymn of the Day: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy ELW 588; Bradley Moggach, Organ**

**Click here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x40YdUod\\_ng&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x40YdUod_ng&feature=youtu.be)**

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### **Prayers of Intercession**

Awaiting the promised light of God that comes in Jesus, we pray for the body of Christ, the world, God’s creation and those who suffer ...

God of abundant blessings, God whose love denies confinement, make us true disciples, removing empty piety from our midst. Make us, your body, an example of Jesus’ unbounded love. We bring forward our prayers for your church, calling on you to show us how to be your body in this time, most effectively.

God of abundance ... **Hear our prayers.**

Jesus our redeemer and way-maker, You came for everyone, bringing forgiveness and grace to everyone.

Not one person or nation or place did you leave out. We pray for our world, our country, our region: so badly in need of all you bear.

God of abundance ... **Hear our prayers.**

Spirit of God, mighty counsellor of all creation, you are here. Where creation groans in pain, where all hope seems lost, you are here. In carbon footprints, big and small, in waterways and forests, in garbage dumps and trash heaps, you are there. Our responsibility for creation and the environment weighs heavily on us. Move us to be better stewards of your creation.

God of abundance ... **Hear our prayers.**

God who comes as Father, Son and Holy spirit, we pray: for families affected by addictions and suicide, of which indigenous families are affected in disproportionately high numbers.

We pray for those who are suffering in mind, body or spirit: we pray for those we name out loud,  
and in the silence of our hearts:  
(leave some silence here)  
May we all lean on you for comfort,  
God of abundance ... **Hear our prayers.**

These, our prayers, spoken out loud or within our souls, we bring before you .... entrusting all into your tender-loving care. In Jesus' powerful name. **AMEN.**

**Share the peace of Christ:**

The Peace of Christ be with you always, in your home and in mine, and throughout God's creation.

**Meal:**

**Click here for the communion liturgy from worship on YouTube:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsiaRdyFr50>

**Prayer after Communion**

Compassionate God:  
you feed us with your bread of love,  
you quench our thirst with your wine of forgiveness.  
Sustain us during this time of Lent:  
give us your hunger for justice,  
make us generous with a love like yours.  
Make us one with Jesus.  
*Amen*

**Sending Hymn: 334 Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MBTeD9XpFw>

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**Blessing:**

May God bless you and keep you.  
May the face of God shine upon you with grace and mercy.  
May God look upon you with favor  
and give you ☩ peace.  
*Amen.*

**Dismissal:**

Go with openness to SPIRIT,  
Trusting in all that God provides.

**C: Thanks be to God. \***

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