

March 21, 2021 – Email/At Home Missal

A blessed Fifth 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, excepting today, March 21st, our AGM Sunday, when we skip story work in favour of a more “traditional” Zoom service.

This week, you will receive the third story with scripture (*George in the Garage*). On March 28th (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) today following worship. Based on our current Red Zone status, council advises with regret, no in-person option will be available for our AGM. Council sends the Zoom invitation this week, to include the AGM following worship:

“St. Peter’s Church Council is inviting you to a Zoom meeting. This link will be used for both the church service and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Sunday March 21st. Please stay on after the church service. After a short 5-10 minute coffee and snack break, we will convene the AGM.”

Thank you

Luis Gomes on behalf of Church Council

Mar 21, 2021 09:45 AM

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84561810376?pwd=cU9lRUxNa3VVUDVCUmg2S1hEU0NGQT09>

Meeting ID: 845 6181 0376

Passcode: 716096

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

“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.”

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-imagining the Way You Relate to God*” by Skye Jethani” with friends from St Luke’s Anglican, lead by Rev Steve Greene (stevegreene@diohuron.org). This Sunday, study covers Chapters 7 & 8.

Time: Mar 21, 2021 01:30 AM America/Toronto

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82416245776?pwd=b2JvOVlJeUQ2cTMrYVJCQUN0Zk55Zz09>

Meeting ID: 824 1624 5776

Passcode: 514044

Wednesday night study at 7pm – hosted by Peace Lutheran Church, Pickering taught by Rev. David Maginley for a 5 week Lenten wilderness journey. This week, the group will study **Crisis and Resurrection**: Imagine using suffering as fuel for transformation. Explore how the quality of your presence empowers you to do what you could never imagine, and awaken to what God has created you to be.

Time: March 17, 7pm

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:

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: All powerful Creator, you give us the free will: the freedom to choose our own way, guided by your Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Help us to always, each one of us, be way-makers for witness. Keep us from being stumbling blocks. Help us to surrender our own motives to the life of the gospel. So that, through each one of us, the Kingdom of God shall become visible: a sign of hope and love for all. Amen.

The Lesson: 1 Kings 3:16-27

The very next thing, two prostitutes showed up before the king. The one woman said, "My master, this woman and I live in the same house. While we were living together, I had a baby. Three days after I gave birth, this woman also had a baby. We were alone—there wasn't anyone else in the house except for the two of us. The infant son of this woman

died one night when she rolled over on him in her sleep. She got up in the middle of the night and took my son—I was sound asleep, mind you!—and put him at her breast and put her dead son at my breast. When I got up in the morning to nurse my son, here was this dead baby! But when I looked at him in the morning light, I saw immediately that he wasn't my baby."

"Not so!" said the other woman. "The living one's mine; the dead one's yours."

The first woman countered, "No! Your son's the dead one; mine's the living one."

They went back and forth this way in front of the king.

The king said, "What are we to do? This woman says, 'The living son is mine and the dead one is yours,' and this woman says, 'No, the dead one's yours and the living one's mine.'"

After a moment the king said, "Bring me a sword." They brought the sword to the king.

Then he said, "Cut the living baby in two—give half to one and half to the other."

The real mother of the living baby was overcome with emotion for her son and said, "Oh no, master! Give her the whole baby alive; don't kill him!"

But the other one said, "If I can't have him, you can't have him—cut away!"

The king gave his decision: "Give the living baby to the first woman. Nobody is going to kill this baby. She is the real mother."

Word of God, Word of Life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

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 Luke 17:1-6

C: Glory to you O Lord

Jesus said to his disciples, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If another disciple^[b] sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive."

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" The Lord replied, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

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

Message (Imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here 😊) Be a Way-Maker 😊

How many of you know the song ... "and they'll know we are Christians, by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love"? It is available to listen to here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEwb51LawAI>

... the words go like this:

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yeah they'll know we are Christians by our love

We will work with each other, we will work side by side
 We will work with each other, we will work side by side
 And we'll guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
 Yeah, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Such a beautiful song with such powerful words ... I want you to hold those words in a part of your mind while you follow today's teaching ...

How many of you watch or follow the sport of curling? This game was "new to me" when I came to Canada, and I found it most peculiar the first time I watched it, as I came to terms with a team sport in which someone's job, their role on the team, was to sweep! You know that person. The one who goes ahead of the ball-thing-whatever it is called, making the ice as smooth as possible so the ball can have the fastest possible race to the winning spot. I don't even know the rules to the game (as you have probably surmised from my limited language), but I found watching this game to be an incredible analogy for our work of thanksgiving as disciples and followers of Jesus.

For if the Good News of our God come down to earth, the message of love, is like that ball-thing in curling, and if Jesus is like the one who launches the ball-thing, then we, on the curling team of the Almighty, are like those busy sweepers, going ahead and clearing all obstacles so that the gospel can get to where it needs to go!

To be those sweepers in this time of pandemic has not been easy. We have had to figure out how to play such a game while safely distancing, masking, and not sharing touch points! We have had to figure out how to play a game we are used to playing with the help of a beautiful arena (otherwise known as our church building) and we have had to learn how to instead practice and learn the play book for this game from our homes. But nonetheless, our job has not changed ... our job is to clear the way, to never ever be stumbling blocks to those who are trying to make their way to the winning place of coming to know Jesus.

We had this job before we got to the pandemic, this way-making job. It is one of the works of discipleship: to live our lives as an example of Christ's love, which generates a curiosity and wonder amongst those who encounter us, so that they feel compelled to ask: why are you like this? Why are you so joyful? Why are you so encouraging? Why are you so filled with thoughts of abundance when everything is so scary, so frightening, so limiting?

Our job is to be mysterious, curiosity-invoking, living examples of a love so magnificent that it surrenders its own self, its own most precious thing in demonstration of this great love. This surrender, this mysterious willingness to give up our own insecurities, our own failures, our own grudges, our own position of privilege in favour of love – this mysterious willingness creates the Kingdom love example that draws people:

- Unbelievers steeped in the idolatry of this time,
- Unbelievers struggling to make sense of the cultural misappropriation of values of this era,
- Unbelievers seeing the world with the normative blindness to suffering,
- Unbelievers who have never experienced love, forgiveness, grace or mercy ...

Our surrender of our own most precious selves to the higher witness of Gospel love provides the Kingdom love example that sometimes will be the only Bible story others will ever read.

This means we are called in our journey together to make choices: sometimes those choices are not easy. In the story of King Solomon which Jann read today, we encounter precisely such a choice-making moment ... two mothers, one living baby (and one dead baby), and a King challenged with determining which woman is the true mother of the living baby.

Both make a claim to the living baby. Perhaps as we all gathered here today make a claim to be followers of the living Christ. Both mothers say "the baby is mine", and the King in a brilliant stroke of wisdom holds the baby up and says "cut the living baby in two – give half to one, and half to the other". This brings both mothers to the point of choice: take half a baby, a half a dead baby, or surrender the baby so it may live.

Imagine if we thought of the gospel that way, in absolute measure: we live this gospel in wholehearted, life-giving way which is not about holding on to the baby, not about splitting the baby in half, making a mess of the ice so the ball-thing cannot make its way down the ice smoothly ... but instead, we thought of preserving the life-giving example

of the gospel, surrendering our own comfort, ownership, egos, privilege and insecurities, and saying instead – it is more important to me that THIS example of hope not only live, but thrive and shine ... if we thought about the gospel that way because the gospel has given us such abundance that we don't even know what to do with it – imagine how it would change the way we witness to those who have not yet tasted this sweet bread of life, this incredible wine of forgiveness?

As church, as a collective of believers gathered together not just by word and sacrament, but by constitutional and organizational realities, we have precisely such an opportunity: to choose to be way-makers, to choose to be the very opposite of stumbling blocks, to choose to not only get out of the way of splitting the baby in half, but to be like the sweepers in that game of curling: going ahead of the gospel and making a smooth, swift way forward.

This is why I have been teaching about homelessness. This is why I always push us towards challenging our own delight in holding on tightly to our own positions, our own “stuff” when these holdings contradict the gospel. This is why individually and collectively I ask you hard questions on Sundays. This is why I hold up both the beauty and the challenge of the gospel when we worship.

This is why I struggle so hard with:

a building locked up for most of a year: warm and unused while so many are cold,
a redevelopment process caught in a stranglehold of stumbling blocks,
a faith whose marriage to tradition threatens to tear the gospel baby in two
a congregational reality that is managed like a business rather than an enterprise of abundant love.

I want team St Peter's to win this curling match for the gospel. I want us each to be way-makers so that our world may know ... they will know we are Christians, by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.
AMEN.

Hymn of the Day: #808 Lord Jesus, You Shall be My Song

Click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNNani5BbPc&list=PL9km5c7GxbOB3i4QzqF7Pn5t16GvMySea&index=10>

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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: #733 Great is Thy Faithfulness

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsQ6szjAnYE>

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.

This brings us to the end of our worship service for today; If you are a voting member of our congregation, we encourage you to take a short stretch break, maybe get a coffee and then come back to our Zoom gathering for our Annual General Meeting.

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Opening devotion for AGM:

Prayer for AGM: Gracious God, we ask for your presence with us as we gather to meet virtually. This last year has been challenging. Help us still to celebrate the ministry we have done together in the past year. Give us vision and hope as we plan for our shared future. Give us courage to follow you in all we do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 13

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. [NRSV]

Word of God, Word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Responsive Prayer:

Pastor: As we gather to meet.

C: Be with us God.

Pastor: We give thanks for your faithfulness.

C: Be our wisdom and counsel – guide our decision-making.

Pastor: We put our trust in your hopefulness.

C: Give us courage to envision your future for us.

Pastor: We give thanks for your steadfast love.

C: Help us to be loving with each other, and with all we meet.

Pastor: As we gather to meet

C: Be with us, God. May all that we do and say today be pleasing in your sight. Amen.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Responsive Prayer:

Pastor: Faithful God, thank you for seeing us safely through another year.

C: We trust in your faithfulness to be with us this in the time to come.

Pastor: Hopeful God, you continue to show us the vision of a future of justice, peace and mercy.

C: Empower us with your hope, and lead us into your ways of righteousness.

Pastor: Loving God, we give thanks for your presence with us today.

C: Fill us with your love, so that we may embody our love in all we do in the time to come.

Pastor: In Jesus name we pray.

C: Amen.

Hymn: #793 Be Thou My Vision

Click here: <https://youtu.be/C2DkJKyKYN4>

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Dismissal

Go in peace: faithful, hopeful and loving.

All: Thanks be to God.