

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 21st February 2021

Lent 1

Seeds of Hope: A Covenant with Creation



Led by Karen Smith

Opening music: Angel voices ever singing

Welcome & Gathering Prayer

In this season of Lent we reflect on our journey of faith with Christ, remembering Jesus' sacrifice.

We remember how Jesus faced temptation in the wilderness, and the temptations we face to look for sustenance elsewhere. We are reminded that through Christ our needs are fulfilled.

We light this candle on this first Sunday of Lent, remembering Christ's perseverance and praying for Christ's strength in our lives.

Prayer: As the days lengthen and we begin to plant seeds for the future harvest, may we remember how Christ became broken for us, and that through Christ we will hunger no more. In the name of Christ, with whom we journey towards the cross, we pray. Amen.

Call to worship

Come, all you people, come and worship.

God has made a covenant with us.

Come, all creatures of the earth, come and worship.

God has made a covenant with all creatures.

Remember the covenant and be thankful.

God remembers the covenant and God will save us.

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2358/>

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Gracious and merciful God

On this first Sunday in Lent we come together to worship you, to praise and thank you, to seek your forgiveness & to ask for renewal.

We come in the name of Christ,
remembering His lonely days in the wilderness,
his time wrestling with temptation, and the ministry that followed
restoring and transforming so many lives.

Lord, you do not give up on us, even when we wander; you guide us in your truth, illuminating a path that we can safely follow.

You do not give up on us even though we fail you; you bless us as love, so amazing, pours in and through our hearts in a constant stream of grace.

You do not give up on us; in you alone we trust, and, gathered here today, we bring this grateful offering of praise and thankfulness.

In you alone, O Lord, do we place our trust.

When we were wandering on rough and stony ground, you reached out, lifted and brought us safely home, our good shepherd gently caring for his sheep.

We are still prone to wander from the path you place us on, eyes easily distracted, listening to a different song, still tempted by the waywardness of youth. Now we humbly ask for your forgiveness and the encircling of your love to keep us safe from harm.

In you alone, O Lord, do we place our trust.

Gracious and merciful God, we come together on this first Sunday of Lent.

Speak to us today and in the days ahead, so that we may know you and love you better. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Adapted from The Act of Prayer by John Birch

[First Sunday of Lent Year B part of The Act of Prayer Year B by John Birch; Contributed by BRF - John Birch | The Worship Cloud](#)

Reading: Genesis 9: 8 -17

Mike Walters

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Words of Assurance

After the storm, a rainbow, our glorious reminder of covenant between Creator and creation, God’s loving arms encircling the world.

After the storm, a rainbow, our glorious reminder of gracious love between Father and children, God's loving arms encircling our worship. Amen

Our Father, who art in heaven, Carol Rayner
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, the power and the glory, for ever
and ever. Amen

Hymn: The Kingdom of God is justice and joy
[Virtual Church Choir - Newcastle Cathedral](#)

The kingdom of God is justice and joy;
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace;
the captives are freed,
the sinners find place,

the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share;
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God is challenge and choice:
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross:
our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal;
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole.
The heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call
and all things cry 'Glory!'
to God all in all.

Words: Bryn Rees 1911-1983
Music: William Croft 1678-1727

Tune: Hanover

Seeds of Hope

Planting together: a seed or bulb to grow through Lent

24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24 NIV

As we start Lent, we remember that this is a time of looking forward to the resurrection of Jesus, as much as it is to reflect on his ministry. He went to the cross willingly, but that doesn't mean it was easy. But he said it was necessary and that his death was a seed that would enable the growth of God's kingdom.

The seed planted today will split open and shrivel up (die) in order for new life to come. We have planted this seed as a reminder of Jesus's words & will share in that growth throughout Lent.

Prayer:

Lord of the seeds,
Blow your seeds of Love and Hope,
Whirl them around by your Holy Spirit
And as the seeds land, bless them,
And bless those who will pick them up. Amen © Ruth Dillon

Reflection:

I'm going to share a guilty secret with you from this current lockdown – I'm taking my time in the morning, listening to the radio in bed, dozing for a while and pootling about before facing the day in a fit state to be seen! I mean, who's going to see me if I don't look my best till after 10 o'clock? A positive from this is that I spend time on morning prayer and often just sit up quietly, prayerfully & thinking about the reading for the

service, as I like to read it each morning to get ideas flowing. It's often when ideas pop in to my head and for me, my creativity is at its best. Or I might fall asleep..

On Wednesday morning I was dozing away, half listening to Classic FM's Tim Lihoreau chatting about it being Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent with listeners telling him what they are giving up for Lent. And then one person said they were giving up, giving up which sang out to me enough to spring up, almost shouting Eureka! I liked that idea and I decided it suits me very well as I 'heard' it in two ways.

I remember telling you in January I'm not a resolution person; a date doesn't drive my decisions on January 1st and neither does it for Lent. A lot has been given up this year already so in my mind, this is not the year to give up something that I need for my well being and sanity in this open ended lockdown period. Chocolate and biscuits are going nowhere! So firstly, I heard it as giving up giving up any thing this year.

Actually, I don't need a reminder that we are in a different season, a time devoted to reflection on our mortality, to turn our attention to Christ's suffering and passion for us and in our place. After all, whatever you give up for Lent, when Easter is here, then the giving up stops. Especially if it was chocolate when the Easter eggs arrive! And you might wonder whether you've accomplished anything or not. Because the focus of most of the giving up decisions we make is on us, the things we know we shouldn't do, have or say anyway, not necessarily

on our relationship with God. Therefore, giving up giving up makes much more sense to me.

Secondly, I heard that phrase 'giving up on giving up' to mean just don't give up; don't give up on life. There is a promise of more and better and different and worthwhile yet to come. I contemplated in a fairly round about way what that meant for us who follow Christ; what the real questions of Lent are for me this year. And it brought me, finally, to see those questions as - what is it we depend on, where do we find ourselves completely and utterly defined as to who we are and where do we find life. Our reading from Genesis about Noah makes it clear what the answers to that are— we are dependent on God, as is all life.

When God makes his covenant with creation after the flood, it is a covenant not only with Noah and his family, not only with all future human beings, but with 'every living creature that is with you'. What's more, God goes on to emphasize this, by detailing all the creatures who are to be involved in this new covenant. Every time the covenant is mentioned, the living creatures are deliberately included. It is as though Noah's action then binds human and all living creatures together for ever. But, of course, Genesis has already suggested, in its first creation story, that that was always God's intention. After all, when God made humans, he does so expressly saying that they are to be responsible for 'every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'.

Humans have always been closely bound up with the rest of the created order, so when Noah takes animals into the ark to preserve them, he is exercising the proper stewardship for which people were created. It is his duty and his joy to care for what God has made. So when God tells Noah that the new covenant is to include the rest of creation too, God could not have paid him a higher compliment. 'Thank you, Noah,' he is saying, 'You are helping the world to be the way it should be.' This connection between humans and the rest of what God has made is part of what I feel Lent is supposed to help us rediscover – how we can help the world be the way it should be.

The story of Noah and his relationship with God is one of promise and new life, for each of us and all life on earth. That rainbow, a symbol universally understood to be a symbol of hope – on our joint Christmas card, on posters and drawings supporting the dedication and resilience of our medical and support professionals in this pandemic, PRIDE – it reminds us that God doesn't give up on us and looks to us to help the world be the way it should be.

This Lent, if you, like me, have your questions to ponder, perhaps think on God's promise to Noah, think of the rainbow and further, to the empty cross we will see on Easter morning and remember: God has not forgotten us. God has promised that He will not forsake us. Hold on to that promise. If anything will help us give up giving up & instead consider how we can contribute to helping the world be the way it should be, the cross and the rainbow should - God has made a covenant with

us & all living creatures and that covenant will not fail. The rest is up to us.

Prayers of Intercession

In this time of COVID-19, we pray:

When we aren't sure, God, – help us be calm.

When information comes – from all sides, correct & not, help us to discern.

When fear makes it hard to breathe, and anxiety seems to be the order of the day, slow us down, God.

Help us to reach out with our hearts, when we can't touch with our hands.

Help us to be socially connected, when we have to be socially distant.

Help us to love as perfectly as we can, knowing that 'perfect love casts out all fear.'

For the doctors, we pray,

for the nurses, we pray,

for the technicians and the janitors and the aides and the caregivers, we pray,

for the researchers and theorists, the epidemiologists and investigators,

for those who are sick, and those who are grieving, we pray,

for all who are affected, all around the world...

we pray

for safety,

for health,

for wholeness.

May we feed the hungry,
give drink to the thirsty,
clothe the naked and house those without homes.

May we walk with those who feel they are alone,
and may we do all that we can to heal the sick—
in spite of the epidemic,
in spite of the fear.

Help us, O God,
that we might help each other.
In the love of the Creator,
in the name of the Healer,
in the life of the Holy Spirit that is in all and with all,
we pray.

May it be so. Amen

[A Prayer During Times of COVID-19 | The United Church of
Canada \(united-church.ca\)](https://united-church.ca)
the Right Rev. Richard Bott

Blessing

The next time you see a rainbow, remember, you have not been forgotten or forsaken. God's promises were true in the past and they are true today. God is faithful and He will keep His promises.

As we take our worship, praise and prayer from this place and into our daily lives, may our lives be sustained through the love of our Heavenly Father.

May we feel the presence of our Saviour walking beside us and know the power of the Spirit in both our actions and our words. Amen

Closing music: Let Him to whom we now belong

Responses led by Carol Rayner

Opening music from [Angel voices ever singing, \(Angel Voices\) - † Free Music Backing Files for Churches - Piano, Band, Pipe Organ † \(smallchurchmusic.com\)](#)

Closing music: [Let him to whom we now belong \(StF 557\) \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)

Hymn: [Virtual Church Choir - Newcastle Cathedral](#) by permission

Hymn reproduced & streamed under CCLI 6025 & CCLI 21997 respectively