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Our Mission as a congregation: Love the Lord Your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy and love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12:19-21 MSG)

February 21, 2021 - First Sunday of Lent

GOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

Prelude

Claire Singer

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship (responsive adapted from Joel 2:12-14)

“Return to me with all your heart,” says the Lord.

Let us turn back to God with humble hearts.

Let us return to the Lord, for God is gracious and compassionate,

And God is slow to anger and abounding in love.

Prayer of Approach: (together)

God of grace, speak to us once more of your forgiveness and mercy and your love and compassion, for we long to be released from the guilt of our choices and the pain of our sins. Free us we pray through your goodness and by the cross of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Children’s story and the Lord’s prayer.

Meditative Music *This Is God’s Wondrous World*

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SCRIPTURE

First Reading: Genesis 9:8-17

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Gospel: Mark 1:9-15

Anthem

Claire Singer

Sermon: “In the Wilderness”

GOD CALLS US TO RESPOND

Meditative Music *There Is A Balm In Gilead*

The New Creed (together)

We are not alone, we live in God’s world.

We believe in God: who has created and is creating,

**who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others
by the Spirit. We trust in God.**

We are called to be the Church:

**to celebrate God’s presence, to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.**

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Meditative Music *Let Us Break Bread Together*

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts,

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right and good to give God thanks and praise

Eternal God, we thank you that in the quiet of the dark nights you are there. When the noise has hushed and the fevered pace of life has chilled you draw us close and tell us that there is more than what we see.

“Be still and know that I am God.”

When we cannot see an end to our troubles and are uncertain about what tomorrow will bring, you show us that change is possible. As the land rests under the blanket of snow and cold permeates the land and we worry, you remind us that there is a plan and a purpose.

“There is a time for everything under heaven.”

In our distress you comfort us with peace and hope. As we look to the future with anxiety, you whisper about the possibility which is ours. When we dare to dream, you encourage us with glimpses of your vision and tastes of your promises.

“With Christ all things are possible.”

Loving God, you lead us to the table that you have prepared for us. On the table you offer us bread to build up our strength and drink as a sign of your grace. You invite us to set aside everything that would stop us from seeing and knowing the beauty and joy around us. You offer us these

gifts and invite us to be your people.

“We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

As we take this bread and break it, we remember that on the night before Jesus died he took bread, broke it and offered it to his followers. He told them it was his body broken for them.

We remember Jesus’ death upon the cross.

As we share this cup, we remember that on the night before he died Jesus took the cup and offered it to his followers. He told them it was his blood through which a new promise was being sealed.

We remember Jesus rising from the grave.

Gracious God, let your Holy Spirit move among us and transform these gifts and our lives. Allow us to see the eternal, experience the extraordinary, and be filled with your love. For we are your people and have come at your bidding in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion (together)

Gracious God, for the bread of life and for the cup of salvation we thank you. Allow us to go forth from this table to live as your people, trusting in the Holy Spirit and walking with Jesus Christ, Amen.

Commissioning and Benediction

Postlude

A warm welcome to everyone who is joining us for worship. May this be a time for you to draw closer to God. The services online are posted each week on our website (www.stjamesuc.com) and through social media (www.facebook.com/stjamesAntigonish)

The prayers and Christian sympathy of the congregation are extended to Minoli Amit and family following the death of her father, *Harris Royston “Eric” Amit*. Please keep Minoli, John, David, Claire, and Alistair in your thoughts and prayers.

The Congregational Annual Meeting will be held on February 28, 2021 at 7:00pm via Zoom. The link is being sent out via our mailing lists and is available by contacting the church office.

The UCW would like to thank Barbara Gardiner for her dedicated work and joyful spirit in fulfilling her duties as the leader of the Ruth Unit. Barb has decided to take a well deserved step back and will no longer be chairing the Ruth unit, nor coordinating the Spring or Autumn garage sales. We know her organization in all these matters will be sorely missed. Until a new chair is chosen, any matters related to the Ruth unit can be directed to Christine Briand 902 863 9463 or christine@betterbodiesbymassage.ca

Spring is almost here, and one of the first signs of the emerging season is the March issue of Connections. So . . . what would YOU like to contribute to our quarterly newsletter? A recipe? A personal reflection? An anecdote? Your hope for the future? A report from a club or community you’re involved with? A rant? Remember, although you might not know it, there is an audience for anything you might have to say. Submissions can be sent to the church office or directly to brendaannerose@gmail.com

Today is Mother Language Day. What’s that and why is it important? Its purpose is to raise awareness of language, cultural diversity and multilingualism around the world. It falls on 21 February because in 1952, four students were killed in Bangladesh during a protest because of a Bengali and Urdu language controversy. Through globalization, many languages are under threat of disappearing altogether and are a crucial aspect of preserving cultures around the world. Therefore, celebrating International Mother Language Day is important as it helps ensure languages are not forgotten, as well as keeping the culture, heritage and history of countries intact. People should be proud of their mother language! Challenge for the Week: learn a few words in the language of someone else you know, but whose Mother Language you don’t speak.

Truth & Reconciliation – Call #71 Missing Children and Burial Information – We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

Scripture Readings for Next Sunday

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 • Romans 4:13-25 • Mark 8:31-38