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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 18, 2024- First Sunday of Lent

GOD BRINGS US TOGETHER

Prelude *All My Trials* (B. Gibson)

Guitar Group

Welcome and Announcements

Introit: (97 MV Listen, God is Calling)

*(Listen) Listen, God is calling, through the Word inviting,
offering forgiveness, comfort and joy*

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Call to Worship (responsive)

Lent is a time of repentance and reconciliation, risk and renewal;

a time to face all that which hems us in and holds us back.

We gather to name the evil that surrounds us:

the injustices that silence us; the pain that drains us of hope.

We gather to claim God's liberating love

in the face of all that keeps us away from embracing God's grace.

Prayer of Approach (together)

**God of the journey, as we follow Jesus into the unknown,
let us recognize temptation when it comes.**

**God of the desert, as we seek to satisfy our hearts
let it be your bread that we eat.**

**God of the wilderness, when we are surrounded by uncertainty
let it be your world we serve and you alone we worship. Amen.**

Hymn: 42 MV *Praise God For This Holy Ground*

Children's Story and Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 365 VU *Jesus Loves Me*

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Responsive Reading: Psalm 25 (p 752 VU)

First Reading: Genesis 9:8-17

Fred Davison

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Gerrit Groenenberg

Gospel: Mark 1:9-15

Anthem: *Hymn to Freedom* (Oscar Peterson)

Sermon: "Repent and Believe the Good News"

GOD CALLS US TO RESPOND

Hymn: 144 MV *Like A Healing Stream*

Minute for Social Justice

Michèle Ashby

Offertory Sentence and Prayer

Offertory Response (104 MV Know that God is Good)

***Know that God is good, know that God is good,
know that God is good, God is good, God is good.
C'est vrai: Dieu est bon! C'est vrai: Dieu est bon!
C'est vrai: Dieu est bon! Dieu est bon! Dieu est bon!***

Prayers of the People

Hymn: 480 VU *Let Us Break Bread Together*

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Hymn: 651 VU *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah*

Commissioning and Benediction

Choral Benediction (213 MV Take Up his Song of Peace)

Take up his song of love and go into the world.

Take up his song of love in every moment.

***In every moment of the journey, we're laying down our lives;
lay them down, in love, lay them down, and take up his song.***

Postlude *Sweet Chariot* (African American Spiritual)

Guitar Group

A warm welcome to everyone who is joining us for worship. May this time help you draw to closer to God and your neighbour. We recognize that we gather in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People, and we seek to be good neighbours to the First Nations

Greeting at the door is Christine Briand

Coffee Hosts are Joanne Clifton and Isabel Tate

Scriptures for Next Sunday

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 • Romans 4:13-21 • Mark 8:31-38

**Prayer Reflection:
A More Comfortable Savior**

Lent makes me so uncomfortable.

I prefer to remain in my 'zone,'
lounging in my chair;
glued to my screen;
relaxing after a long day;
but you would lead me
into the wilderness

into those uncomfortable places
of tempting,
of power,
of testing.

I would like to hear words
about success,
and praise,
and feel pats on my back,
but you talk about
self-denial;
you mention the cost
of following God;
you invite me (!)
to shoulder
a cross.

couldn't you have sent
a more comfortable
Savior,

O God?

THIS WEEK AT ST. JAMES

Tuesday, February 20

10:00 am Hot Meal Program
3:00 pm Meditation Group in Meeting Room. For more information, call Fran @ 902- 863-3546

Wednesday, February 21

10:00 am United Church Worship at the Rk MacDonald Nursing Home.

Thursday, February 22

10:00 am Hot Meal Program
7:00 pm Senior Choir. New Members welcome!

The Congregation's 2023 Annual Reports and Financial Statements are available at the door (electronic copies are available online). Please pick up a copy and look through them and don't forget to bring your copy to the meeting on February 25th.

The Tax Receipts for 2023 donations are available at the door. If you didn't get yours on the way in please speak to a members of the Finance and Stewardship Committee at the door.

Canada Helps - Looking for a copy of a tax receipt for a donation you made to St. James through Canada Helps in 2023? We don't issue those from the church office but they are available through Canada Helps directly. Go to <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/tax-receipts/> they will email you a duplicate (all you need is the email address you used when you donated).

Your Social Justice Committee invites you to note that this year's NS Heritage Day, on 19 February celebrates "William Hall VC". Please see the bulletin insert for more information about this important Nova Scotian. 20 February is the World Day of Social Justice – prayerfully consider ways you personally can promote social justice in both your own life and the broader community. 21 February is Mother Language Day. What better way to honor languages than by starting to learn a new one?

UPCOMING AT ST. JAMES

Sunday, February 25

11:30 am Our Congregational Annual General Meeting will take place after a meal hosted by the church council. Everyone is welcome and invited.

Interested in the wider United Church? The Nominating Committee are looking for one or two more people to serve as representatives from St. James to the Bermuda-Nova Scotia Region. The Regional Meeting is this May in Truro. For more information please speak to Rev. Peter, Joan MacGillivray or May Mackenzie.

St James' Prayer Circle is a small group of folks who believe in the power of prayer. We are happy to pray for individuals and situations upon request. If you'd like to join us or if you would like to bring forward a prayer request, please speak to Michèle Ashby after church or call her at 232-3473. All matters are kept strictly confidential.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Antigonish Lions Pancake and Sausage Breakfast on Sunday February 25 from 9-12 at the Lions Den . Donations at the door and the proceeds will go to Imagination Library Antigonish.

Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage: A Via Dolorosa of Solidarity
This Lent, Christians (and all who want to take part) in over 80 cities in 12 countries will be walking in prayerful solidarity with the people of Gaza. Each step is an act of prayer for the lives lost (both Palestinian and Israeli) and for the path to peace to be chosen. Antigonish will be taking part in this global movement. Over two days (Saturdays, March 2 and 9), we will walk 36 kilometres, which is the distance from Gaza City to Rafah. If you would like to walk all or part of this, and want more information, please go to Antigonish4Gaza's facebook page or send an email to savmaat@yahoo.ca. If you would like to volunteer as a support car driver or co-pilot, to lead one of the walks, help with event promotion, or in other ways, please send an email to Natasha at btgarrison@hotmail.com. For more information about the Gaza Ceasefire Pilgrimage, please visit their webpage: <https://www.gazaceasefirepilgrimage.com/>

Celebration of Holy Communion
for the First Sunday of Lent
St. James United Church, February 18, 2024

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.”

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might;
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest!

Bless'd is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

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.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

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 once again. For we are your people and have come at your bidding in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen. Amen. Amen*

Sharing of Bread and Cup

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 and live as your holy people, trusting in the power of your Holy Spirit and walking in the way of Jesus Christ, Amen.

This prayer is from *All Things are Ready* by Peter Andrew Smith © 2007 CSS Publishing. Used by Permission.