

Immanuel United Church
March 26, 2023
Lent 5

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Land and Affirming Acknowledgment

Today we acknowledge the land
That we are gathered on is Treaty 1 Territory
The traditional lands of the Annishnaabe,
Cree, Oji-cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples,
As well as the homeland and heart
Of the Red River Metis people,
Who for thousands of years,
Walked gently on this land
With deeply rooted gifts of spirituality, culture
And ways of knowing.

We respect the Treaties
That were made on these territories,
Acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past,
And give thanks for the stewardship of this land –
In times past and also in the present day.

Today we are called to seek a new relationship
As indigenous and non indigenous people.
Creating one based on friendship,
Built on respect,
And on that produces peace,
Remembering that we are ALL treaty people.

As we enter this time of worship,
The rainbow candle is lit
To symbolize and remind us

Of the commitment that we have made
To be an inclusive and affirming community
And that all God's people belong here.

Call To Worship:

The prophet asks: can our soul weary bones live again?

O God, you know!

We ask: can we dance again after mourning, loss and grief?

O God, you know!

The gift is sure and unmistakable:

God's breath poured out as new life for weary souls!

Let us celebrate the gift of God's new life,

And come to worship God in laughter and song!

Opening Prayer:

Compassionate God,

The wind of your Spirit is the very sign of life

For all who long for you.

One breath from you and we are rescued

From the arid valley of dry bones,

Given muscles and sinews and joy with which to praise you,

And filled with the holy hope you grant to all your faithful children.

Let our who lives be filled with life-breath of the Spirit,

That what has lain dormant may burst into bloom.

May be revealed as but sleep

Before the emergence of new life.

Amen.

Hymn: VU#373 As Comes the Breath of Spring

Lessons from the Wilderness

This is the fifth week of our Lenten words lessons on the theme of Lessons from the Wilderness. Each week, we have a word that is inspired by the story and we will try to see how with the help of Jesus'

teaching, we can change the word into something more positive and beneficial for ourselves and our world.

This week our first word is Sorrow. All of us will experience sorrow at some time in our life. When we lose someone or something that we love, it is natural to feel sorrow. How we react to and express our feelings of sorrow is individual to all of us, as is the length of time we are burdened by the sorrow. Because sorrow is so specific to an individual, it can be very isolating. When we are in the depths of sorrow, it can be so isolating that we feel bereft and alone.

But Faith can help. It won't make you immune to sorrow and it can't magically make the sorrow go away but it can help to soothe some of the feelings of being alone. One of my professors at University defined Faith as the willing suspension of disbelief. So if we have Faith, we can believe that even at the times when we are in the abyss of sorrow and are having difficulty seeing the light, we are not alone and the light is still there. The United Church creed tells us that God is with Us, We are not alone. Let us have the faith to believe it.

Let us pray:

Holy One

During this time of Lent, open our eyes and hearts to your beautiful world that surrounds us. Help us to trust that following your way is the path that best serves us and others. Lead us as we venture into the unknown. Help us to continue in the spirit of inclusivity that you modeled for us. Strengthen our connection to you and to others. Let our faith in you continue to grow.

Amen.

Prayer Seeking Wholeness:

Reviving Spirit, we cry out to you:

“Our bones are dried up!”

But we mean:

“our souls are hungry, and all we have purchased cannot give us the strength to live.”

We cry out:

“Our hope is lost!”

But we mean:

**“We are afraid. If we work to change the world,
What will we lose?”**

We cry out:

“We are cut off completely.”

But we mean:

**“We resist connection with the ‘other’
Because it may cost us our comfort.”**

But you, loving One, have been promised to us.

The prophets have spoken truth and

Through this truth, we know you, God.

Breath of Life, tear us from our fears.

Clothe our fearful bones and fill us

With the wonder of your love and compassion,

Until we dance the dance of truth,

Of justice, of peace, and of hope.

Spirit, live within us,

As we dance the kingdom into being.

Words of Grace

Sung Response: MV#97 Listen, God is Calling

**Scripture: Ezekiel 37: 1-14
John 11: 1-45**

Choir Anthem Will You Stay and Pray

Reflection

Hymn: VU#186 Now the Green Blade Rises

Offering

Offertory: VU#538

For the Gift of Creation

Offering Prayer

Through our gifts, Loving One,

May we humbly continue your work

Of justice and love in this world.

May these gifts be used to empower the meek

And give hope to the oppressed.

We ask that you bless us so that we,

Encouraged by your presence,

Continue to share your love with the world.

Amen

Prayer of the Community & The Prayer of Jesus

Holy One, on this fifth Sunday of Lent,

We hold onto hope.

We dream of moments of sorrow that

Shift and grow into a hope

That fills the world with courage and love.

We give thanks for the abundance

That surrounds us,

And for the diversity that gives life its richness.

In the midst of our gratitude,

We hold prayers of concern and care.

So we take this time right now,

To offer those very prayers,

The prayers of our hearts and minds, to you.

We pray for the whole world,

For all creation, for every living creature

For plants and flowers,

For animals and fragile human beings,

Gracious God, in your love,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who suffer,
The sick, the dying, for those living with sorrow
And for the broken relationships in our lives,
Between us and others, and us and you.
We hold up those struggling
With addiction, mental health issues,
Chronic and new illness.
Gracious God, in your love,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the nations of the world,
For the grand diversity of people,
For the land and water that sustains and renews life,
Gracious God, in your love,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the leaders of our cities, provinces, nations, and countries,
May they remember to lean into you
And to listen carefully for your wisdom and compassion.
Gracious God, in your love

Hear our prayer.

Loving One, protect those in our community
Who are street involved and experiencing homelessness
Or inadequate shelter,
Be with those who are alone,
Those who believe themselves unloved,
Those who have been cast aside.
Accompany those who live without enough,
Who have to choose between food and bills,
And who are denied the basics of life.
Help them to know that they are not alone,
And help us to find ways to advocate for them

So that they might have enough to live and thrive.
Gracious God, in your love,
Hear our prayer.

We lift up our own prayers, Holy Listener,
Prayers of concern and celebration
For those in our families, our circles of support,
For the others that touch our lives.
In the silence,
We lift up to you the prayers that
Wind themselves through our hearts and minds,
Prayers we seek to share with you.

We offer these and all our prayers
Confidently knowing that you hear us,
And hold these prayers close.
May this be the truth we hold on to
As we join our voices together to speak
The prayer that Jesus taught:

Our Father...

Hymn: VU#586 We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection

Commissioning and Benediction