

Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church Chinook Winds Region At Home Worship

March 22, 2020 Lent 4

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We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for the land and the people, as those who came before us did.

The Lenten Space

As you worship at home, try to create a space for that. It could be as simple as lighting a candle (either flame or battery); or placing a small cross or a symbol that has meaning for you in front of you. If you are alone, perhaps start a journal, as you reflect on the worship experience. Or, perhaps call a friend and share this time with them over the phone. If you are with one or two others, enjoy the conversation that arises.

Opening Prayer

In the midst of uncertain times, O God, may we know your presence among us.

May we also sense the presence of those across our community of faith, and trust that they are being cared for and surrounded by your love.

As we worship in the sanctuary of our homes, we pray for those who are working in essential services, and serving in ways that present risk. Keep us calm, keep us safe, keep us living in hope that all will be well. Amen.

HYMN MV 92 Like a Rock *(sing or say the words)*

Like a rock, like a rock, God is under our feet.

Like the starry night sky, God is over our head.

Like the sun on the horizon, God is ever before.

Like the river runs to ocean, our home is in God, evermore.

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READING

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long

Response: For the Word of God in scripture, for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us... **Thanks be to God!**

A TIME of REFLECTION

Many of us know this passage by heart. It is near and dear to so many. It actually is one of the lectionary readings for the 4th Sunday in Lent this year. It is so timely for these days we are in, too. It is a passage that offers assurance of God's presence, even when we are feeling lost and alone. Many of us, because of the need for social isolation, or social distancing, because of the fears associated with COVID 19, may be experiencing that sense of being lost and alone.

We hear words of hope from the perspective of a shepherd, one who cares for animals that put their trust in their care-giver. Even that gives us a sense of trust – in that in so many ways, we are being asked to put our trust in our medical system, in our governments, in our community leaders, as we navigate the unknown territory we find ourselves in.

The psalm writer speaks of the hope that comes with God's anointing, with the recognition that even a lowly shepherd, one of little status in his/her community, is worthy of God's attention.

So...in your journals, or in conversation with those who are with you today...

Where are the green pastures, the still waters, for you?

When you feel like you're in the valley of fear, of uncertainty, who can you reach out to?

Where are you finding a sense of trust and hope in these days?

Where are you seeing God's anointing, God's love, being poured out?

HYMN VU 238 How Great Thou Art vs. 1 & 2 (sing or say the words)

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy Hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Chorus

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze,

Chorus

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CLOSING PRAYERS

Shepherding God, we bring to you our prayers this day.

As we live in these times of doubt, of fear, of isolation, may we trust in your love. May we find ways to reach out to others, and share in whatever ways we are able, your love and compassion.

For the wider world – we pray for hope, for healing, for love as this pandemic shifts our sense of normal, and affects economies, social engagement, communications, and

other aspects of how we live as global community. We pray for scientists working towards a vaccine and treatment methods, for medical personnel and emergency workers around the world.

Closer to home, we lift in prayer all those who are ill, or hurting, that they might be healed. And we pray for their families and care-givers in these days, too.

As we continue our Lenten journey, may we be mindful of your presence among us, and trust in your love.

We take a moment of silence to lift up the prayers of our hearts...

God of love, we offer the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, 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. 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.

BLESSING

We go from here, renewed and refreshed, eager to be God's presence in the world.

We go with God; we go with the blessing of the Spirit; we go with love. Amen.