

ZOOM Worship with Communion for March 7 2021

Words printed in Italics would traditionally be spoken by the entire congregation. If your microphone is muted please feel free to speak those words along with our readers, and of course sing along with the hymns!

***Please make sure your microphones are muted during the service.
If you have called in on your phone, press *6 to mute yourself.***

To participate in the ZOOM worship over your telephone, call 647-374-4685 or 647-558-0588, and when asked enter this meeting id: **829 3573 8888** and this pass code: **224756**. You will hear the service and even be able to speak when it is appropriate.

Rev. Joanne

Welcome and Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee, and later the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nations.

The territory is mutually covered by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Announcements

Centering Music: "Nothing can trouble" VU 290

**Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten, those who seek God will never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten, God alone fills us.**

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer:

One: Loving God, into our comfortable lives,
where we find food for body, mind, and spirit

Two: *breathe a call to reflection.*

One: Into our ordered days of isolation and lock down

Two: *breathe a call to innovation.*

One: Into our self-centered ways that are the result of fewer connections

Two: *breathe a call to walk these Lenten days with Jesus and with community –
calmly, purposely, hopefully.*

One: God of our seasons, God-with-us through changes,
God of fresh ideas and fresh starts,
be with us we worship far away from each other today,
but never far away from you.
Help us to hear your truth wherever we are,
guide us to your mystery across the distances of time and space,
and sanctify the virtual space we occupy today as
your faithful and beloved community.
Amen

Opening Hymn: "God is Here" VU 389 verses 1 and 4
**God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.**

**Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!**

Scripture Reading: John 2:13-22 *The Inclusive Bible*

Since it was almost the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons, while money changers sat at their counters. Making a whip out of cords, Jesus drove all of them out of the Temple - even the sheep and the cattle - and overturned the tables of the money changers, scattering their coins. Then he faced the pigeon sellers: "Take all this out of here! Stop turning God's house into a market!" The disciples remembered the words of scripture: "Zeal for your house consumes me." The Temple authorities intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you've done?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

They retorted, "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you're going to raise it up in three days?" But the temple he was speaking of was his body. It was only after Jesus had been raised from the dead that the disciples remembered this statement and believed the scripture - and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Choir: "Feed Me Lord"

Reflection: *included at the end of the service for those reading at home*

Hymn: "Jesus Christ is Waiting" VU 117 1, 2, 4, 5

**Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.**

Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.

Make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you

**Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.**

Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.

In the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.

**Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats.**

Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.

On suspicion's graveyard let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,

"Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet."

Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.

Walk one step before me; I will follow you.

Sacrament of Communion

One: The Spirit of God be with you.

Two: *And also with you.*

One: Turn to God, the source of life.

Two: *We lift our hearts in prayer.*

One: Let us give thanks.

Two: *We offer joyful thanks to God.*

One: Creator of light, Giver of all life, Source of love.

From the dust of the earth, you created us in your image.

From the bondage and slavery, you delivered us.

Through all our wilderness wanderings you guide us.

Two: You call us to renewal and repentance,
to justice and compassion,
to healing and wholeness.

We thank you for sending us Jesus,
your Chosen One, Bread for our journey.

One: He lived and loved this human life,
taking upon himself our suffering and sorrow,
being tested as we are tested,
and reaching out to broken victims

of the world's brokenness.

Two: In him we come to know your truth,
to feel the life that is Christ within us.
So it is that throughout these Lenten days and nights
we continue to worship you, and bless your name:

MV 203 (sung)

**O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space,
All earth and sea and sky above
bear witness to your grace.
Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise.
And blessed is the one who comes
and bears your name always.**

One: As we gather at this table,
we remember that on the night before he died,
Jesus had supper with his friends.
He took a loaf of bread,
prayed thanks to you as we have thanked you,
broke the bread, and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Each time you do this, remember me."

Two: Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
passed it to his friends, saying:
"Drink. This cup is the promise of God,
made in my blood.
Each time you drink from this cup, remember me."
By remembering Jesus in this way now,
we claim our common heritage
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

MV 204 (sung)

**Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,
Christ will come again!
Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,
Christ will come again!**

One: We pray you, God of Love,
send your Holy Spirit upon us and what we do here,
that we, and these gifts,
touched by your Spirit,

may be signs of life and love to each other,
and to all the world.

Two: At this time, we also remember all those
with whom you would have us share your feast.
We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .
all who are ill or alone . . .
all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .
all whom the world counts as last and least
We pray for your church and its varied ministries . . .
for the nations as they strive for peace and justice . . .
for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .
for our families and friends

The Lord's Prayer VU 960

One: Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and forever. Amen.

Breaking the Bread and Filling the Cup

Prayer after Communion

One: We give thanks that bread broken brings wholeness;
that wine poured out replenishes;
that time spent with the Risen Christ
and one another is gift and grace. Amen.

Closing Music: "Sent Out in Jesus' Name" MV 212

**Sent out in Jesus' name, our hands are ready now
to make the world the place in which the Kingdom comes. (Repeat)
The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love, of justice and of peace.
The task is ours to do, to set it really free.
O, help us to obey, and carry out your will. (Repeat)**

Blessing:

Go into the world – no matter how your horizons may have changed –
to speak God's justice, to hear the cries of God's people,
and to choose the challenging way of Jesus.
And as you go, know that God's love surrounds you,
the presence of Jesus guides you,
and the Spirit accompanies you on your Lenten way. Amen

Rev. Joanne's Reflection "Clearing Out the Clutter"

This scene in the Temple at Jerusalem comes early in John's gospel, before much of Jesus' ministry and travels through the countryside. In our other four accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, this scene is played out closer to the end of Jesus' journey, prompting some to believe that this clearing and denouncement was a significant factor in Jesus' arrest. Although it is brief, and no matter where it occurs in the telling of Jesus' story, it does give us some insight into the customs of Jewish worship in the first century. Sacrifices to God were made regularly by the Temple priests on behalf of the faithful – perhaps a calf for the birth of a son, perhaps a pigeon for atonement, a goat or lamb for purification after becoming ritually unclean. Sometimes parts of the sacrifice were eaten; sometimes the entire offering was burnt.

In even more ancient times than depicted in our gospels, Israelites gave to God some of what they believed God had given them through their sacrifices, expressing their close relationship with God and seeking to deepen that bond. Acceptable sacrifices were outlined, particularly in the book of Leviticus. In Jesus' time, many travelled long distances to visit the Temple, or lived within the city and did not keep their own animals. A system had been introduced for those who needed or wanted to make a sacrifice. They could do so by purchasing an 'unblemished' sacrifice conveniently at the Temple in the outer Court of the Gentiles.

Of course transactions needed coins, as did the yearly 'Temple Tax' paid by the people. The standard in the Temple was the silver shekel of Tyre, and those needing to make purchases or pay their tax would exchange their own local or Roman coins for the dependable shekel or half-shekel. And just as the sellers of animals needed their profits, so did the money exchangers. It was a 'captive' consumer base – people needed both coins and sacrifices.

Both of these practices began, I'm sure, as a way to encourage and facilitate the religious observances of the Israelite people. What Jesus encounters is a system that no longer seems related to worshiping God and one that has created a marketplace instead of a holy space. The bottom line of commerce had become the ruler in what had been created as a space for gentile people to come and pray, to encounter God in some way.

Jesus' goal in this cleansing is not just to drive away those who had become distracted by commerce and defiled a place that was meant to be sacred, but to echo the prophets and declare in his own prophetic voice what would transpire. The Temple would, indeed, be destroyed, and the sacred space where God resides is to be Jesus' own body – untouchable by death.

In our own time, the pandemic has driven us from our temples – the worship places where many of us find connection with God, the spaces in which we had always worshiped and offered our own sacrifices of time and talent and money. Just as Jesus' actions in clearing the Temple courtyard created an opening for people to rethink their faith practices and perhaps connect with God differently, perhaps our own experiences of leaving our church might offer the same opportunity for us.

How are we connecting with God right now? Where are we finding sacred space? How are we still able to offer to God from what we have? What do we need to 'clear away' in our lives so that we can sit with God in prayer or contemplation, or be encouraged to live as followers of Jesus?

I know I have found personal reconnection with God's presence in creation during this enforced absence from the church building. Friends have expressed a new-found sacredness in preparing meals or baking because they have more time to spend in the kitchen, although some still struggle with isolation and are feeling tired of restrictions. Others have renewed their interest in worship as they find recorded services or alternative ways of praying and learning over the internet that give them comfort and connection. The food drive held at Applewood in the fall – when we couldn't enter our building – actually resulted in far larger donations than we had seen before. We have found new ways to be together as people of faith that may continue in some form after restrictions are lifted.

In the words of a favourite hymn, "Come and Find the Quiet Centre" writer Shirley Erena Murray reminds us that with God we can "clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see all the things that really matter." May we all be able to look beyond the upheaval of pandemic times and find God's presence, look beyond the story of Jesus' actions as he cleared the Temple to see where God is leading us, and look beyond the clutter in our own lives to find a path to action in Jesus' name.