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Our Mission...

to be an accepting Christian community dedicated to living, sharing and teaching the word of God.

We respect all aspects of people including race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, age, religion, mental wellness, and ability.

Good Friday
April 2nd, 2021

Bold print indicates a congregational response.

WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

WELCOME and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LAND

We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1 land, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree and Dakota peoples, and the homeland of the Metis nation. We are thankful for these first inhabitants and we commit to working together towards justice, truth and reconciliation.

THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

So, we light this candle, affirming that Christ, the Word made flesh, is our hope and our salvation. There is no other in whom we place our trust.

INTRODUCTION AND PRAYER

**Gracious and eternal God,
look with mercy on us, your family,
for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed
and given up into the hands of sinners
and to suffer death upon the cross;
who is alive and glorified with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.**

PRELUDE: #136 VU – "O Come and Mourn with Me Awhile" ~ words by Frederick William Faber
(Words reproduced & music played with permission under license #A-620529) ~Michael McKay

Today's Prelude invites us to grieve: not only to grieve for the death of our Saviour, but also to grieve for our sins, for which our Saviour died.

- 1 O come and mourn with me awhile;
O come now to the Saviour's side;

O come, together let us mourn:
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.

THE SEVEN WORDS FROM THE CROSS

PRAYER OF THE DAY

**Saviour of the world, what have you done to deserve this?
And what have we done to deserve you?
Strung up between criminals, cursed and spat upon,
you waited for death, and look for us,
for us whose sin has crucified you.**

**To the mystery of undeserved suffering,
you bring the deeper mystery of unmerited love.
Forgive us for not knowing what we have done;
open our eyes to see what you are doing now,
as, through wood and nails, you disempower our depravity
and transform us by your grace. Amen.**

(All Readings and Meditations by Sylvia Sands from Darkness Yielding)

READING *The Song of the Bird*

He loved us, birds of the air.
Listen to his stories of ravens and eagles –
and even sparrows: two sold for a farthing,
and not one falls to the ground without the Father knowing.
Here I am, perched on his cross,
eyeing those thorns
burrowing blackly and blindly,
burrowing secretly, searingly, into his brow.
Tell me,
Where is that damned dreamy dove of peace now?
His beak is longer and stronger than mine.
Look, I've tried.
I've flown into,
 under his sweat-soaked, blood-drenched, once-beautiful hair.
I've tried to wrench out one, just one, of those thorns.
I've beaten – nearly broken – my wings, against his face;
and all I've done is to draw more blood.
Fierce are those thorns,
 force-driven into his head.
With what strength I have left I'm flying,
flying away from my failure,
flying away lest I forget
the music trapped in my breast for sunset and dawn:

flight and music – his gifts.

As I fly a hoard of young sparrows come twittering and taunting,
laughing and crying after me:

Red breast! Red Breast! Whoever saw a red breast before?

I glance down as I fly

and see my breast flame crimson against the gathering dusk.

The fellowship of his sufferings:

In my heart, as if to break it, creep sunset and dawnbreak,

And in my soul a new song is born with which to greet them.

INTERLUDE: *(Words reproduced & music played with permission under license #A-620529)*

~Michael McKay

Jesus, keep me near the cross;
there a precious fountain,
free to all, a healing stream,
flows from Calvary's mountain...

FIRST WORD *"The Soldier" and the Candle is Extinguished*

Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

I'm a soldier.

So I try not to listen when I hammer in the nails.

I try not to listen to what the condemned man may say.

Otherwise you lose your beauty sleep.

"Father, forgive them;
they do not know what they are doing."

I've heard curses and threats and brave defiance,
but never, never, as the hammer swung, concern for me.

At least that's what it seemed as I was shocked into meeting his eyes,
the hammer heavy and stilled in my hand for one dreadful, ice-cold moment.

Through the blood and thorns and nails his eyes met mine with tenderness.

Suddenly I wanted my mother and my wife
and my gentle daughter to cradle my head in their laps
and hide me, hide me, from this man's gaze.

And here I am, throwing dice, with his words hammering,
hammering in my head,

hammering, ...hammering in my heart,
like nails of love and forgiveness, and tenderness,
piercing me, piercing me, for all eternity.

INTERLUDE: *(Words reproduced & music played with permission under license #A-620529)*

~Michael McKay

Eternal Christ, you rule
speaking pardon from the cross;
forgiving pounded nails; death did its worst and lost.

READING

The Lament of the Trees

Have you ever considered the longing of the trees?
Our branches outstretched in silhouetted prayer,
yearning, yearning, towards the sky?
Our branches stooping with aching desire, like washerwomen over water?
Have you ever considered the language of the trees?

In the spring we whisper to one another.
Oh, to be honoured, part of a temple;
to be useful, a boat curving through water,
the door of a loved home,
the plough of a farmer,
the yoke of an ox,
the toy of a child.

On the breeze come the rumours:
A master carpenter in Nazareth, whose carved birds fly away,
whose sculptured horses ride the wind,
whose tables seat twelve.

Oh, to end up in his hands!

Hear then our shame, take note of our lament,
to have those same creative hands crucified on our branches,
and to soak up the lifeblood of a man who loved trees.
Across the world in autumn, across the world in fall, we shed our tears.
And the willows have been weeping, the willows have been weeping,
ever since this bitter, twisted Friday.

SECOND WORD

"The Mother" and the Candle is Extinguished

Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to her,
"Woman, this is your son." Then to the disciple he said, "This is your mother." From
that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

People are kind.

Come away, they cry. No need to put yourself through this.
He'll understand.

But I am his mother,
And though nails pierce his body, and a sword sunders my soul,
I must stand with him,
I must stand by him,
I must stand up in this his hour of dying.

And yet, and yet, there's more at stake than that.

From somewhere within this horror of great darkness,
Gabriel-haunted still, I dream dreams, hear voices, see visions.
I see others.

Mothers, sons, brothers, daughters, sisters, fathers, friends, lovers,
A vast army who will not turn away;
Clad in the armour of fidelity and hollow-eyed courage,
They will stand by, stand with, stand up,
In those slow, dimming, dove-grey hours of dying...

INTERLUDE: (Words reproduced & music played with permission under license #A-620529)

~Michael McKay

At the cross, her vigil keeping
stood the mournful Mother weeping
where he hung, the dying Lord...

READING *The Cross of the Donkey*

I've always been laughed at:

Silly ass, ...just a donkey, ...two a penny, ...a beast of burden.

So when I hit the heights that Sunday, palm branches beneath my hooves,
easing the pain of the Jerusalem hills,

carrying the Carpenter of Nazareth on my back like a king, I thought:

Never, never again will they break sticks across my back,
or leave me starving in fields,

untrimmed feet grown ridiculous, obscene and crippling.

Oh, no, the world will know a donkey, a *donkey*,

carried the Prince of Peace into Jerusalem.

The laugh's on *them* now.

That's what I thought. I should have known better.

With hindsight they blame me.

I should have *known* I was carrying him to his death, that's what they say.

Of all creatures I should know how fickle humans are.

Why didn't I bolt? Why didn't I stop dead in my tracks? Dig my hooves in?

So I have stood broken, despairing, all through this unending night,

remembering his gentle hands on the reins,

his thoughts finding a place in my heart.

We have a battle of love to win, little donkey, he said.

And just when I thought my darkness would never end,

at dawn, a little bird with a blooded breast flew over.

Hold your head up, noble creature, she cried,

your back is marked with the sign of his cross!

Donkeys all over the world are beaten, starved, tortured, worked till we drop.

But sometimes, ...sometimes,

a man or woman is humble enough to trace with reverent hands across our backs,
the imprint of his cross, and kneel,

...kneel before a donkey.

THIRD WORD

"The Thief" and the Candle is Extinguished

Today you shall be with me in Paradise.

A cross is a strange place to begin to hope,
but this man dying with me,

 caring for his executioners,
 caring for his mother,

caring for his friend, this man gives hope.

A cross is a strange place to find faith, but this man sarcastically labelled
The King of the Jews, dying regally, dying purposefully, dying with me,
this man inspires faith.

A cross is a strange place to feel loved,
but this man dying with me, promising Paradise,
promising Paradise from a place of integrity and agony,
this man, as sure as I'm dying, will not stop loving even me.

INTERLUDE:

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~Michael McKay

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

FOURTH WORD

"The Mother" and the Candle is Extinguished

I thirst.

Always – he was always thirsty.

In the star-filled stable surrounded by the milk of human kindness he drank deep.

In the howling, beast-filled wilderness, finding streams in the desert,
always he was thirsty.

Thirsty for joy and laughter, and wedding jokes,
tricks of turning water into wine, throwing his head back, laughing.

Always he was thirsty.

Thirsty for friendship from fishermen and freedom fighters,
from tax collectors and harlots, from rich young men and serious young women,
from children, and from beggars at the roadside.

Always he was thirsty.

And now his thirst fills the whole world,
and waters its broken heart, slowly, slowly, with nothing but his own red blood.

While I, his mother, hearing a child's cry in the night,

Mummy, I'm thirsty,

cannot move, cannot reach his lips, cannot change the wine into water.

but am rooted, rooted helpless to the rock.

INTERLUDE:

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~Michael McKay

“And now his thirst fills the whole world,
and waters its broken heart, slowly, slowly,

with nothing but his own red blood.”

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one,
stoop down, and drink, and live” ...

READING *The Nocturne of the Night*

Twelve o'clock in the afternoon,
and one of the stars in the universe began screaming,
while down the hill of Golgotha pounded a young lad,
scattering five loaves and two fishes as he ran, crying,
Turn out the sun, turn out the sun!
Words – it so happened – that found a place in a mother's heart,
who, in her anguish, had been groping wretchedly and in vain
for a prayer – any prayer – to cry.
Yes, turn out the sun, she echoed.
In answer to the screaming star,
 in answer to the boy's cry,
 in answer to the distracted mother,
I the Night, already fearful and brooding, descended.
Tenderly I came,
 wrapping my cloak of darkness round his twisted limbs,
 as his mother once wrapped him in swaddling clothes.
Slowly I came,
 sending arms of darkness round the shaking shoulders of his disciples,
 hiding in the fields.
Gently I came,
 dropping a jet blanket over the trembling form
 of a beautiful woman in scarlet prostrate in the dust of Calvary.
Relentlessly I came,
 stopping the heartless rattle of dice,
 dulling the brazen glint of swords, and spears, and armour.
At twelve o'clock,
earlier than ever before or since, I, the Night, came to Calvary,
ushering in black shadows in which humanity could hide its face like a child,
ushering in at twelve o'clock in the afternoon,
ushering in the dark night of the soul.

FIFTH WORD “Mary of Magdala” *and the Candle is Extinguished*

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
I have been waiting
(remembering all the little demons peeping out from behind my eyes),

I have been waiting to hear him speak my name,
Mary,
Mary of Magdala.

My God, my God why have you abandoned me?
Now I know he will not, will not speak my name.
For this God-forsaken cry is specially for me,
standing God-forsaken at the foot of his cross.
When did he and I need things spelt out between us?
So I know this worst cry in all the world is for me.
For I am not calm, like his mother,
or comforted, like that thief,
or trembling on the brink of faith, with that blood-stained centurion,
or purposeful, like John.

Oh no.

I stand in the utter black-flamed darkness of despair –
But closer, closer than them all, to his broken, God-forsaken heart.

INTERLUDE: *(Words reproduced & music played with permission under license #A-620529)*

~Michael McKay

“Why has God forsaken me?”
cried out Jesus from the cross,
as he shared the loneliness
of our deepest grief and loss.

SIXTH WORD *“The Disciple” and the Candle is Extinguished*

It is accomplished!

What are the words behind the words?
We vied among ourselves to understand him,
I, John,
and Peter,
and James.

But I cannot lay my head on his breast now, and ask him gently,
What are the words behind the words?

Here in the darkness, I grope to see the mountain he has climbed above Calvary,
the miles walked by his paralyzed feet,
the peace won by his violent wounds,
the wisdom and ignity gained in thorn-filled contempt;
the millions already sheltered in his outstretched arms.

Here in the darkness, I, John, am praying,
Oh, what are the words behind the words on Calvary?

INTERLUDE: (Words reproduced & music played with permission under license #A-620529)

~Michael McKay

Calvary's mournful mountain view,
there the Lord of glory see,
made a sacrifice for you,
dying on the accursed tree.
“It is finished”, hear him cry:
trust in Christ and learn to die.

READING *The Anger of the Earth*

Saint Francis, they say, that intuitive dreamer, went too far,
believing that the ravines and caves hollowed out on Mount Alverna,
were created by an earthquake when Jesus died.
But lovers of the Earth know Saint Francis was right.
I, the Earth, declare it.
Every falling drop of his blood shook my depths;
every groan from his lips shifted the subsoil;
stalactites shivered like crystals, falling like chandeliers.
Enraged, I could hear the anger stirring in my bowels;
 enraged, I shook my mountainous shoulders
 in preparation for a great explosion against humanity
for its callous cruelty, its exploitation of trees and metals, wood and nails.
Seven words stopped me,
Seven words spoken from his cross.
Ever since,
 every Friday,
I, the Earth, remember,
 remember the final whisper from his dying lips,
releasing through the world an earthquake of love
 that broke in tow my mighty heart.
All lovers of the Earth know Saint Francis was right.

SEVENTH WORD *“The Soldier” and the Candle is Extinguished*

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.
I am not easily impressed –
and I *have* seen men die with courage before.
But in these last hours, it has seemed as if the whole world
has been pivoting around this central cross, and turned completely upside down.
Thieves have spoken with the voices of children;
 the learned have been transformed into mere fools;
 women have stood resolutely upright like warriors;
 violent men like me have sunk gently to their knees.

He who should be powerless, pinned to his cross,
has taken control,
 has taken heaven by storm,
 has taken my breath away in his final trustful prayer.

And I, on my knees in the dust,
 am forced to say,
 rejoice to say,

This man was son of god,
this man was prince of peace.

THE SOLEMN INTERCESSIONS

...Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, have mercy.

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.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

THE REPOACHES OF THE CROSS

(by Janet Morley, from Darkness Yielding)

*I brooded over the abyss, with my words I called forth creation:
but you have brooded on destruction, and laid waste the earth and seas...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I breathed life into your bodies, and carried you tenderly in my arms:
but you have armed yourselves for war, breathing out threats of violence...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I made the desert blossom before you, I fed you with an open hand:
But you have grasped the children's food, and eroded fertile land...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I abandoned my power like a garment, choosing your unprotected flesh:
But you have robed yourselves in privilege, and chosen to despise the abandoned...*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I brooded over the abyss, with my words I called forth creation:
but you have brooded on destruction, and laid waste the earth and seas...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I would have gathered you to me as a lover, and shown you the ways of peace:
but you have desired security, and you would not surrender yourself...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I have torn the veil of my glory, transfiguring the earth:
but you have disfigured my beauty, and turned away your face...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I have laboured to deliver you, as a woman delights to give birth;
but you have delighted in bloodshed, and laboured to bereave the world...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

*I have followed you with the power of my spirit, to seek truth and heal the oppressed:
but you have been following a lie, and returned to your own comfort...(silence)*

*O my people, what have I done to you?
How have I offended you? Answer me.*

**Mysterious God, dark and strange,
Holy and intimate, have mercy on us.**

Turn again, my people, listen to me. (silence)

Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus.

*He humbled himself and in obedience accepted the death of the cross.
But I have bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord.*

Turn again, my people, and listen to me...

POSTLUDE: #136 VU – “O Come and Mourn with Me Awhile” ~ words by Frederick William Faber

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~Michael McKay

Because today's readings include meditations on the Seven Last Words of Christ, this hymn had been chosen for both Prelude and Postlude, not only because of the opening line of verse 3: “Seven times he spake, seven words of love”, but also for the invitation to grieve found in the title.

- 3 Seven times he spake, seven words of love;
 and all three hours his silence cried
 for mercy on the souls of all:
 Jesus, our Love, is crucified.