

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

First Sunday of Lent – February 21st, 2021

Prelude: “Elfin Dance” Eduard Greig – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

Today is the first Sunday of Lent.

For those who order the Broadview (the United Church’s magazine) from the South Buxton Pastoral Charge, 2021 Subscriptions are due the end of February. Envelopes have been distributed or mailed to those on our list. If you wish to receive a copy and you are not on the list, please contact me at 519-689-7555. Thank – you.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call To Worship:

People: Through healing waters, through troubled waters, through still waters, through dangerous waters, through welcoming waters. God is with us.

Eric: Come, let us worship.

Opening Prayer:

We are grateful, Creator, for sacred water that flows in our bodies and through the earth. Water is a powerful force that both creates and destroys, sustains and erodes, deposits and washes away. Yet, water is wasted, polluted, and ignored... In this time together may we seek ways to restore good relations, and remember all the ways your gift of water is life. Amen.

Scripture: Genesis 9: 8 - 17 – “A Dove’s Story” by Carol Broadbent

I was in the dark for a long time, sitting on a beam in a corner of the ark. It was hot, sweaty, and noisy. So, when Noah came down and asked me to leave and find solid ground, I was happy to do it. I searched and searched. It was so good to feel the wind on my wings. Finally, I found a plot of land, with a tree on it. I took a twig and returned it to Noah. He looked relieved. Now, we are all back on land. The waters are gone. I could have flown away immediately, but I had come to care for Noah and his family. I wanted to stay nearby. The waters left a big mess. There was so much more work ahead for the land to be liveable again. We were all tired, but we got to work making nests, making a home.

One evening, not long after we exited the ark, something happened. The cool air got suddenly warm. The buzzing bugs were silent. The wind died. The clouds opened, and a beam

of sun came through. Noah sat in its light. He was silently leaning forward. His head bobbed and nodded from time to time as if he was listening intently. When he looked up, a rainbow appeared. It stretched from one side of the sky to the other, vibrantly shining red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. For a moment, we all looked on. And then the moment passed. The air became cool again. The bugs started to hum. The wind returned. But the rainbow stayed. It didn't fade.

"What just happened, Father?" asked one of Noah's sons. Noah cleared his throat. "God just spoke." There was a pause. Everyone stopped.

"God has made a promise," Noah started, "not just with us," he looked at his family now gathered around him, "but with everything." Noah looked past his family to the animals, the trees, and the land. He even glanced at me as I sat, watching, from a nearby tree.

"Never again will God cover everything in water. God loves the earth, and everything on it: every person, every plant, and every animal. Everything is included in God's promise. You, me, and all future generations. Everything is included." Noah's eyes returned to the rainbow, still bowed overhead. "That," said Noah, pointing, "is the sign of God's promise."

"That beautiful rainbow reminds us of God's promise that love and peace are more powerful than anger and hurt. And every time the rainbow appears, the promise is remembered."

"What do we do now?" asked one of Noah's sons. Noah gave a small smile. "We'll wait and see," Noah said.

Opening Hymn: "Rise and Shine" by "Little Fox"

Message: "Signs of Promise"

God, who has created all things, wants to have a deeper relationship with all things including us. When life's waters threaten to overwhelm us, we need to trust God is with us – right here, right now. When we make poor choices, may God re-orient us to choose life with God.

Water and God's promises are key themes of today's story. After a great flood, God promises to safeguard the world and to be in deep relationship with all creation. This is a good time to remember that in our baptismal water, we are given new life with Christ.

It's interesting that we start our Lenten journey off with the story of Noah and the flood. Lent is known to be a time of waiting – being prepared. Yet we do see the waiting in Noah's story, as they have to wait until the flood waters recede – before they can get off the ark. I can imagine with an ark full of animals that waiting for those flood waters to recede could be very trying. Noah's family had to care for all the animals, including cleaning out the leftovers.

The dove becomes an important part of the flood story. Each time the dove is sent out, and the dove returns with nothing - it would be a sign that all earth is still under water. Life for those on the ark would carry on as it had been. They would

need to wait longer to receive their freedom to dry land. Eventually the dove returned with a leaf in its beak – a sign of dry land. Noah, his family and all the animals could now be free from the ark and all its smells. They have reached dry land.

After the ark is emptied, God promises to protect and never destroy the earth and makes a covenant with all creation. A rainbow is a sign, a reminder, of the promise. God wants to be in a deep and mutual relationship with all of creation. So when we see a rainbow we are reminded of God's deep relationship with each one of us.

What are we waiting for? Spiritually, our waiting is the preparation we are doing as we journey towards Easter. Lent is a time of reflection of becoming closer to God and reflecting on God's promises. Throughout our Lenten journey - life continues. We will still go to work, still shop for groceries, still order online, still pray for our friends and family who are sick, comfort one another when someone dies. Yet in the midst of many of these events, we will have to wait. Not so much because of Lent, but more because of the Pandemic Lockdown. Like Noah we are being forced to wait until it is safe to go outside.

Trusting and relying on God's promises – even when life is difficult, and the wait is long – is key in today's story. In all times, God invites us into a deeper relationship.

Have you ever done something – and then after, say, “I promise never to do that again?” Have you been able to honour that promise? How strong are your promises? Promises can be signs of integrity. To ensure that integrity, there is a time of waiting. Waiting to ensure you will do what you said you will do.

We all know how rainbows are created. We understand the theory and science behind the wonderful display of refracted light. Even with this knowledge, a rainbow bursting through clouds still touches our hearts and imagination in mysterious ways. How many times do quiet adults exclaim, “Look at that rainbow?” If you are having a tough day, the sight of a rainbow can change your whole mind-set. We become lost in the grandeur and beauty of the rainbow, maybe even standing in awe that we are experiencing a divine moment, seeing in real life one of God's mysterious ways.

As we travel through Lent and experience life at its fullest, all the good, and the bad, waiting for Easter Sunday, let us remember the rainbow with all its grandeur and promises that we are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 266 “Amazing Grace”

- 1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.
- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.
- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
- 4 The Lord has promised good to me,
this word my hope secures;
God will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.
- 5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: As we see these Signs of Promise today - let us give in Love.

Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

Creator God, in all that we do, all that we say, and all that we give, may we live out your covenant to care for all creation. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Eric: To you, O God, we pray.

People: In you, O God, we trust.

Eric: For you, O God, we wait.

People: Lead us, so that we may always follow in your way.

Eric: Teach us so that we may remain steadfast and faithful.

People: Remind us of our covenant, so that we may be a covenantal people, striving to care for all of creation as you care for us.

Eric: Where there is brokenness and discord in your creation... *(silence)*

People: Where there is death and dying... *(silence)*

Eric: Where there is isolation, exile, and forced migration... *(silence)*

People: Please send reminders of your love and, where possible, help us to be your messengers.

Eric: We pray all these things in Jesus' Name...

*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.*

Commissioning: *Adapted from Meister Eckhart*

Eric: Love God in all things equally.

For God is equally near to all creatures.

And among these creatures God does not love any one person more than any other.

God is all and is one.

All things become nothing but God.

Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things.

If we spent enough time with the tiniest creature

– even a caterpillar –

we would never need sermons.

So full of God is every creature.

Go and spend time in God's Creation

and in the amazing presence of God in all things, now and forever more.

Postlude: "On the Wings of a Dove" – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.

It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as "In the Spirit We Are One".

Cancer:	Karen	Ona	Earl
	Jasmine	Sharon	COVID deaths
	Tom	June	Davidson Fam.
	Randy	Melonie	Waites Family
	George	Susan	Barry
Special:	Richard	Zoe	
	Cleata	Jerri	
	Hillie	Willie & Gisele	

