

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Second Sunday of Lent – March 13th, 2022

Prelude: “Oh Promise Me” – De Koven – by Christie Coatsworth

We are meeting in-person at St. Andrew’s at 11 am each Sunday for 2022 (as you feel comfortable with the changing COVID situation). Our Sunday morning Zoom meeting will gather at 9:30 am, the service will be at 10 am.

Welcome & Announcements:

St Andrew’s in Chatham are restarting their “Saturdays at 7” concerts with the March 26th Concert with the Steel City Rollers at 7 pm. You can view in person or virtually.

St. Luke’s and Talbot Street are returning to in-service Church next Sunday March 20th. For the first month we will be meeting at Talbot Street each Sunday.

We are taking donations for Ukraine. The South Buxton Pastoral Charge will match dollar for dollar (up to \$500) for donations offered. You can donate through your treasurer (put Ukraine in the memo) or you can ETransfer from the website at Southbuxton.ca . We will send donations after next Sunday March 20th. Thank you.

Next Sunday will be the baptism of Mabel Ramboer at St. Andrew’s.

Welcome to St. Luke’s today as we celebrate the second Sunday of Lent.

We are planning for St. Andrew’s Annual Meeting the last Sunday of March, the 27th. This will be an in-person meeting.

St. Andrew’s is hosting a St Patrick’s Day Beef Stew Take Out this Thursday March 17th. Pick up at St. Andrew’s from 5 to 6 pm. Tickets are \$15 each. Call Alice 519-689-4408 or Gail 519-689-7767 for tickets.

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites – Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to our production crew; music by Christie Coatsworth, readings by Annette Skillings and the slides by Tracey Major. You make all the difference. Thank you!

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: Loving God, our light, our salvation, whom shall we fear?

People: Loving God, our light, our salvation, stronghold of life.

Eric: Loving God, our light, our salvation, shelter in every trouble.

People: One thing we ask of our God, that we may live in your house all the days of our lives.

Eric: Loving God, our light, our salvation, come and be home to us, as we worship you this day.

Opening Prayer:

People: May we shape a space to meet you, O God, a space that plays with mystery, opens up justice, seeks peace, and binds us together as community. May we make alive the Lenten journey of promise, full of expectant hope that with the going will come good. May we travel through dust and ashes, bread and wine, water and hope to find you, the God who travels with us. Amen.

Opening Hymn: VU 333 “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”

- 1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.
- 2 Come, almighty to deliver;
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.
- 3 Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee,
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Scripture: Genesis 15: 1 – 12, 17 - 18 “Ritual of Promise”-

Abram fell back onto his sleeping mat, exhausted. It had been a huge effort, not only to lead his men on a rescue mission for Abram’s nephew Lot but to resist the rewards that were thrust upon him on his successful return. But, Abram had promised God that no other would be able to say, “I have made Abram rich.” Abram breathed in deep, and sighed a long and hard breath out, shaking his head, and looking forward to deep sleep.

But just then the word of God came to him with the promise – “Don’t be afraid, Abram, I will look after you; you will receive a great reward.”

“Really!?” Abram replied, in his tiredness, forgetting his manners. “What do you mean by great reward? Sarai and I are still without children, that’s a reward we want.”

God, to reassure Abram, whom he loved even when he was tired and grumpy, asked Abram to get up and come outside. “Look at the stars, Abram, count them if you can. This is how it will be with your descendants; you won’t be able to count them either.”

And for some reason, Abram believed God, and God believed Abram’s true commitment to relationship with God.

Then God repeated another promise: “I am your God who has brought you here from the land of Ur so that you might live in this new land.”

“How will I know that all this will happen and that you will be with me? Can you give me a sign?” And God gave Abram a sign.*

God instructed Abram to bring a 3-year-old heifer, 3-year-old female goat, 3-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Abram knew these were the animals for the ritual of making a covenant between two people, so he cut the heifer, goat, and ram in half and placed the parts side by side. He didn’t cut the birds. Abram sat down to protect the animals and birds of the ritual from the birds of prey.

Once night had fallen, a flame of fire flashed between the animal pieces and over the birds. This was God’s symbol, a symbol of the promise and God’s faithfulness.

God said to Abram, “To your descendants – your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, to many generations – I will be faithful to my promises.” Abram felt very grateful that God had chosen Sarai and him to be part of God’s unfolding love for the world. And yes, Sarai and Abram did have a baby.

Message: “Promises to Abram and Sarai”

Our journey in faith, allows us to trust in God when so much of the world’s evidence says don’t do it. May we follow God throughout this Lenten journey, even when the world says not to. May we live with an seemingly impossible journey when everything else says we can’t. May we know you promise to be with us, and that our rewards are not of this world, but of eternity.

As we journey through Lent, we may find life seems thinner than usual, and the journey more focused than normal, yet we continue to walk forward one step at a time. Today’s story is of Abram and Sarai who were walking an unknown journey, yet they knew God was with them. God reminds Abram and Sarai to go and participate in the rituals that reminded them of God’s promise. Although this promise was not yet fulfilled, participating in the rituals, gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible to trust.

Abram finds himself living within a promise. Today’s reading describes the ritual that establishes the covenant between Abram and God, which is meant to be enough for Abram and Sarai to trust God despite all the evidence to the contrary. Abram and Sarai have been promised children, but all Abram can see is that his line will be continued through his slave. We can almost hear the disappointment in the voice of Abram. Only later will he understand the truth; for now he must trust.

So what is with cutting the animals in half and laying them out with fire passing through them? This may have been an ancient ritual whereby two sides come together to form a treaty, dividing the riches equally. The fire stands as a symbol of cleansing and forging. The ritual is a means to establish a new relationship. Ritual is the visual sign of something that has been forged between two people or nations or, in this case, between God and Abram.

In our contemporary world, we see treaties being made regularly; forming new communities, establishing peace, symbolizing a new cooperation in economics or politics. Treaties are a symbol, and more importantly a concrete means, of preparing now for the future. Treaty making is work we do now in order that the future will be better. For Abram and Sarai, their work is simply to believe and trust, but it began with questions. While it may not seem that this was easy for Abram to participate in the rituals - to believe and trust was not easy for Abram. But what else could he do? With participating in the ritual, the covenant has been established and all there is left to do is believe in the covenant and strive to live within God's promises.

The ritual that established the relationship between God and Abram began with questions. Any worthwhile relationship usually starts with questions. Many covenant relationships do express frustrations and doubts. It is hard to go into a new relationship without checking into the details. Trying to dot all the "I"'s, and cross all the "T"'s can be daunting, but the more you work out now is better for a strong covenant. But when you make a covenant with God, do we humans have much say?

Can we humans even imagine that through this covenant that God is living through the present and into the future as much as we are, toward a future still to take shape? What happens to us today when we participate in a ritual that closes the gap between ourselves and God? I'm thinking of Holy Communion or Baptism. We might start into the ritual thinking, "Oh, its Communion today". As we journey along in Communion we ask God to join us. Are we listening? Regardless it seems that in the end something happened. We leave Communion in a different space than when we started Communion. We feel touched and cared for – sometimes in ways we cannot explain to others. We are sure God was here, with us in this ritual of Communion.

This could also be our experience as we move through the wilderness of Lent: We trust the future, but the present experiences count against what we are trusting for. What rituals might we use this Lent to hold on to this new journey of faith? What rituals might keep our eye on the prize?

In modern day treaties and covenants, few people know what is written in the pages and pages of binding documents, but when we see the rituals of the press conferences and the signings themselves (which are all media events), we know something special has happened. Do we see the heavens open and something new comes forth from heaven? Not likely. Somehow though rituals may very well create trust in what is being done. We believe something will come out of this new relationship.

Reflect upon some rituals you go through, such as writing Christmas cards, gathering for a meal, or taking photographs of milestones that symbolize a family or community event. Do these rituals help you to move ahead into a new relationship?

Maybe the most known ritual that sets out a new relationship is the ritual of marriage. Even in today's world of later marriages, the covenant of a marriage starts a new family. The parents of the couple look towards the day they will become grandparents. The couple look forward to life together as a family, and also as parents. Two people come together for a common dream for their future. The couple is in this together.

Today's covenant between God and Abram establishes that they are in this together. Our journey into Lent reminds us that we are in this together. What questions do we bring as we work to trust in this future of new life after death?

As we prepare for Lent, may we keep in mind that life goes on for many friends and families in our community. There continues to be illness, discrimination, economic hardship, and other life challenges might cause some to struggle with everyday life. Do they see the notion of God's promise? Today we have heard the story of how Abram used a ritual to seal the covenant between God and himself. What rituals might we offer to our community to help them through their everyday life issues? How about prayer? Or end of life rituals – if necessary? Marriage ceremonies? Baptism or dedications?

Rituals can begin journeys and keep us on the journey. What rituals keep us on the journey of faith? What rituals might we use through our Lenten journey? How might we see the promise of God as we journey? Our Lenten journey may not be an easy journey, but it's a journey we must travel. We do not travel it alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 663 “My Faith Looks Up To Thee”

1 My faith looks up to thee,

thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine.
Now hear me while I pray;
take all my guilt away.
O let me from this day be wholly thine.

2 While life's dark maze I tread,
and griefs around me spread, be thou my guide,
bid darkness turn to day;
wipe sorrow's tears away;
nor let me ever stray from thee aside.

3 May thy rich grace impart
strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire.
As thou hast died for me,
O may my love to thee
pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Remember the words of Jesus who said: "Freely you have received, freely give".

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:

People: Receive all we have touched today, all we have given, all we have known as our giving to your realm. These are our offerings to you forever. Bless them in the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn: VU 377 "Holy Spirit, Hear Us"

Holy Spirit, prompt us
when we bow to pray;
speak within and teach us
what we ought to say.

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Eric: Many paths, many journeys, many ways, many chances,

People: each person loved by you, God, in every place where your love is met.

Eric: May we this Lent bring a return to the covenant in which we love God and our neighbour as Jesus teaches: God, renew the face of the earth.

People: May we this Lent make a time for truth, justice, and peace in the decisions of state, national, and world governments: God, renew the face of the earth.

Eric: That Lent may be a time for each household to strengthen bonds of love and communication: God, renew the face of the earth.

People: Hear our prayers, O God, as we join in the promise to live Jesus' way of love.

Eric: Be with these we have journeyed with today.

People: Be with these we have prayed for today.

Eric: Be with these we have met today.

People: We are an unique combination and community.

Eric: May the love we have tangled with today,

People: the grace we have woven and the peace we have shared,

Eric: reflect and belong in your reign, O God, as we offer the prayer Jesus taught us...

*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.*

Blessing:

Eric: May the God of love, the God of Abram and Sarai, show us we are the gift God created for world, now and forever more.

May the Blessing of God Be Upon You: VU 429

May the blessing of God be upon you.

May God's love light all your way.

May the grace of Christ enfold you
and peace around you stay.

May the Spirit of God dwell within you.

May you live in joy each day.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: "Theme from Exodus" - Ernest Gold – 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:	Tom	
	Louise	Louise' Granddaughter - Blake
	Betty	Ingrid
	Alison	Brenda
	Nancy	Lisa
	Sarah	Larry
	Brian	Jack
	Zoe	Becky
	Barry/ Marsha	Francine

Melissa
Jenny
Heather
Gary
Gus (Sick kids)
Chris
Michelle

Karen
Michelle
Ross
Margaret
Dolly
Ukraine