

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

First Sunday of Lent – March 6th, 2022

Prelude: “Count Your Blessings” – Irving Berlin – 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.

Welcome to Talbot Street today as we celebrate the first Sunday of Lent.

We have rescheduled the SBPC Annual Meeting to this Wednesday March 9th at 7:30 pm at St. Andrew’s. This will be an in-person meeting. We are planning for St. Andrew’s Annual Meeting the last Sunday of March, the 27th.

St. Andrew’s is hosting a St. Patrick’s Day - Beef Stew Take Out on 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 – Talbotstreet.ca and Southbuxton.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: Who makes the desert bloom?

People: It is God who makes the desert bloom.

Eric: Who turns stones into bread?

People: It is God who turns stones into bread.

Eric: How shall we offer thanks to God?

People: We will offer the best of what we have been given.

Eric: Come, let us worship God.

Opening Prayer:

People: Shape this moment with us, O God as we enter into the season of Lent. Call us again in this time of challenge. Journey with us once more through this land, and speak to us of ancient promises breaking open once more. This is our journey, O God, and you are our guide. May we travel together. In Jesus Name, we pray. Amen.

Opening Hymn: VU 651 “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah”

- 1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
 pilgrim through this barren land.
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
 hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
 feed me till I want no more,
 feed me till I want no more.

- 2 Open now the crystal fountain,
 whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
 lead me all my journey through.
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
 be thou still my strength and shield,
 be thou still my strength and shield.

- 3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
 bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
 land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises
 I will ever give to thee,
 I will ever give to thee.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26: 1 - 11 “Learning How to Give”-

The people of Israel didn't have a place to live. For years and years, they had been wandering around, looking for a place to stay. Then, one day, God led them to a land that looked like a wonderful place to live. **“This will be your country,” God said. “This will be your new home.”**

So the people of Israel moved into their new country. They brought their tents and their sheep and their goats and their camels. They brought everything they had.

“What a beautiful country,” they said. “There's lots of grass for our animals to eat. There is good ground to grow nice gardens. There are big trees with figs and other fruit we can eat.”

“How can we say thank you to God for our new home?” they wondered. “We should say the words, ‘thank you’ when we pray to God. But we also should do something. We should do something that will help us remember how good God has been to us.”

Then someone remembered what Moses said to them. When the people of Israel were wandering around in the desert, Moses, their leader, told them how to say “thank you” to God. **“Whenever you grow something in the ground, or pick something off a tree, give the first part of it to God.**

“The first melon from the garden.

“The first fig from the tree.

“The first wine from the grapes.

“The first baby sheep and the first baby goat.

“The first part of everything.”

“But how can we give it to God?” they wondered. “God is everywhere. God isn’t like a person you can hand something to. When we want to give something to God, what do we do with it?”

They puzzled and puzzled, until someone remembered what else Moses had told them. “Take those first fruits to the place where you worship God.”

“That’s a good idea,” they said. “And then we can use those things to help people who are poor and who don’t have enough to eat. That would be a good way to give things to God.”

And so from then on whenever the people of Israel gathered the first harvest from their gardens, or picked the first fruits from their trees, they always said, “The first melon goes to God,” or “The first of the wine from the grapes goes to God.”

Message: “Practice Gratitude”

We are continuing on our journey – our faith journey towards the resurrection of Christ. As we move into the Season of Lent we are offered a different landscape as our focus is now upon the destination of new life after death. We have just journeyed through Epiphany which with new insights, we have the confidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and one of the Holy Trinity. This faith journey we are now on focuses on the Journey towards the cross. This is a tough journey as we realize that Jesus the King is a different king. Jesus is a king with Holy powers. Jesus uses the powers of words and of submissive action, even unto death. We see in Jesus just about everything that is opposite to how we and our fellow humans would act if we were in the same situation. We are blatantly reminded that Jesus is of God’s Realm, and not of this world.

Yet for us on this journey of tough faith understandings and decisions, the road is foreign, even alien like. We may actually be on a road we do not wish nor choose to travel. Yet on Ash Wednesday the first Day of Lent, we mark the dust of the ashes upon our foreheads to remind us of our death and decay. Also in the Ash Wednesday Service we are reminded that we journey with the hope in God who sees potential even in ashes and dust. We are reminded of resurrection.

This morning’s story from Deuteronomy could be and has been interpreted in several ways. The first way that we use this story is for ownership of the land we want, because “God has given it to us.” This becomes our desire to use this statement for power over our possessions, “It is mine and you cannot have it”. Our First Nations people remind us that all land we travel across – belongs to Mother Earth, the Great Spirit or as we faithful would say, “All land belongs to God”. This makes sense as we are only on this earth for a finite period of time – maybe 100 years if we are so blessed.

In Deuteronomy, God dwells in the land and the people of Israel who enter the land are reminded of this; the land is God’s and God dwells here. In more modern

times as humans have received ownership over certain acres of land, this story has become part of a religious narrative to prove particular land has been given to particular people. This claim is part of what underlies the ongoing Palestine/Israel conflict and conflicts in many other places where invading cultures have tried to claim that their God has given them the land, which the original inhabitants believed belongs to all. What is your take on this Deuteronomy text?

As you inhabit the land and use it for ongoing life by planting crops or feeding your animals, Deuteronomy continues with giving an offering to God for a token of thanks for the land. The idea of giving to God your “First fruits” is an ancient understanding that the land and its produce belong to God. Those who live in the land have a responsibility to share that gift with others, and to preserve it for future generations. God’s gifts are universal.

Today’s story about Deuteronomy, gives our modern day understanding of God some credibility. God does not need anything that we might be able to give God – after all God created everything. God has shared with humans that we are to look after each other. Others can have difficulties in growing their own food. Others can be caught in the midst of conflict. Others may not be physically able to care for themselves – maybe because of age; too old or too young. There are many reasons that others need our help to be looked after. We look after them when we give of our blessings to do God’s work in feeding the hungry, helping the sick, and clothing the naked – especially in Canada’s cold weather.

Last week the Canadian Foodgrains Bank had a Zoom information call to share some of the latest world issues. It was the same day as Russia invaded Ukraine. The three major hotspots for food for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is in Northwestern Ethiopia (which is suffering from a Regional war), South Yemen (Also because of a Regional war), and South Sudan (also suffering from a Regional war). All these countries have plenty of food, but those in these war conflicts cannot access food because they have no money and they have been forced off their land so they cannot grow their own food. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank has been offering these folks food coupons to buy local food. Without these conflicts, these people would be able to feed themselves. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank shares that we have enough food, but distribution of food is really the problem.

In 2014 when the International Rural Church met in Malawi, we learnt that each year areas of Malawi have crop failures (mostly from drought or flooding). In Southern Malawi the land is rolling to flat and many of the larger farms are found around the city of Blantyre. These farms feed the cities of Malawi including

Blantyre and Lilongwe. In the northern area around the city of Mzuzu the land is mountainous, and grows coffee, tea and edible nuts. There are plateaus of bananas and other fruits as well as small acreages of maize and tobacco – their commercial crop, because you cannot eat tobacco. In those years that an area suffers a crop failure the Malawi Department of Agriculture buys from prosperous areas to feed their people who have no food that year. In Malawi, it is very unusual to have crop failures year after year – so this year you are fed, next year your surplus is sold to the Department of Agriculture to help out another area. In 2016 with major flooding in Southern Malawi – it was very difficult for Northern Malawi to feed the rest of the country. Those years the Department of Agriculture needed to buy outside their country which increased their food costs. Even the best plans can have unexpected circumstances.

Offering our blessed gifts to others, is the way we say thanks to God and are reminded of the gifts God has given to us. It's not about possessions, but that we have a place to live, with resources to live comfortably in a place that values life, and in a place that values a just sharing of the gifts of God. As we start our journey into Lent, we are reminded that we are called to the one place where all belong, the Commonwealth of God. We are shaping the reign of God as we travel this wilderness journey of Lent.

Lent is about a choice, either to put down roots, or to journey. This is not just a practical question but a theological one – to push our doctrinal roots into a land and claim who is in and who is out. Or will we let ourselves wander through this wilderness land knowing the only one who ultimately owns anything, is God. God who created all – everything and continues to create all things. It is God who calls us to journey and travel as foreigners in a new land, trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us and call us through the wilderness.

Many of us come to the Season of Lent prepared to journey into the depths of spiritual life, including our anxieties, our doubts, our struggles, and our feelings of alienation. Others want nothing to do with Lent – they just want Easter – they do not want to travel the journey of the wilderness. Whichever journey we take, God goes with us. We may even find out at Easter we have travelled the journey without even realizing it. Each Lent, we are reminded that the Lent journey is not an easy journey, but a journey we must travel. We do not travel it alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 706 “Give Thanks for Life”

- 1 Give thanks for life, the measure of our days,
mortal, we pass through beauty that decays,
yet sing to God our hope, our love, our praise,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 2 Give thanks for those who made their life a light
caught from the Christ-flame, bursting through the night,
who touched the truth, who burned for what is right,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 3 And for our own, our living and our dead,
thanks for the love by which our life is fed,
a love not changed by time or death or dread,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
- 4 Give thanks for hope, that like the wheat, the grain
lying in darkness does its life retain
in resurrection to grow green again,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Remember the words of Moses, as he told them how to say “thank you” to God. “Whenever you grow something in the ground, or pick something off a tree, give the first part of it to God”. May we do the same.

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: O God of life and truth, you have gifted us with the discipline of giving, so that we might truly celebrate thanksgiving. Continue to lead us away from temptation and deliver us from evil, that we may remain always alive in the joy of your holy reign. 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: We pray for the peace of the world, O God, especially in the Ukraine as they experience warfare on their soil.

People: We pray for the peace only you can give,

Eric: the absence of conflict and battle,

People: the fullness of life that is prosperity for all,

Eric: goodwill among neighbours,

People: a warm welcome for every outsider.

Eric: We pray for our own nation; Canada – for our freedoms and prosperity, and for democracy.

People: we seek your Shalom: for all of us Canadians

Eric: For those families buffeted by the storm of economic despair and for war-torn countries.

People: for our families, our friends, ourselves.

Eric: We gather these and all our prayers,

People: those spoken aloud and those too deep for words,

Eric: in Jesus' name as we share his 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.

Blessing:

Eric: We go now following the Christ on the way. May this journey through the season of Lent bless us, the way guide us, the grace shape us, the love renew us. We are the people of the way - we journey towards the cross, 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: "Give a Little Bit" – Davies and Hodgson – 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
Betty
Alison

Louise' Granddaughter - Blake
Ingrid
Brenda

Nancy
Sarah
Brian
Zoe
Barry/ Marsha
Melissa
Jenny
Heather
Gary
Gus (Sick kids)
Chris
Michelle

Lisa
Larry
Jack
Becky
Francine
Karen
Michelle
Ross
Margaret
Dolly
Ukraine