

The United Church of Canada  
**St Francis Manoir & Grace Village  
& Manoir Stanstead**

A service for personal meditations at home  
Lent 2021 (week 1)

**Grounding Prayer**

(Take a deep breath, center yourself within the love of God)  
God, You are present, may I be transformed by this encounter.

**Opening Prayer:**

Gracious God, I want to see your goodness in the land of the living—here and now, in this world of flesh and blood, in the midst of deep fears and desperate hopes. Give me grace to put my trust in your mercy, even when my heart aches out in fear. Help us notice the whisper of your presence amid all the noise and news that clamour and threaten. Let your love, like a healing stream, flow through us and carry us onward to a new day. May it be so, may it be so, Amen.

**Christ Light:**

I light this candle, remembering that I live in God's world and I am not alone.

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Challenging God, you have guided your people throughout the ages to sing and pray and reflect. You invite me to listen to timeless stories. Help us to receive the ever-new message of radical love. May it find a place to rest deep in our souls, so that we might draw strength and courage. Amen.

**A Reading from the Hebrew Psalm 25:1-10**

- 1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
  - 2 O my God, in you I trust;  
do not let me be put to shame;  
do not let my enemies exult over me.
  - 3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;  
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
  - 4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
  - 5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.
  - 6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.
  - 7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for your goodness' sake, O Lord!
  - 8 Good and upright is the Lord;  
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
  - 9 He leads the humble in what is right,  
and teaches the humble his way.
  - 10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
- The Living Word, I listen with my heart, my mind and my spirit.*

### **Candle Meditation:**

The time of reflection and stillness is upon us. It is the first week in Lent—the season for journeys of the heart. Take a moment, take a calming breath. Be still. We are entering a holy time. The Lenten candles have been lit, but over the next six weeks the light will slowly fade into darkness. For we are retelling the story of Jesus' betrayal and suffering and death. We do this not to be morbid, but because in the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, God is revealed—in the amazing transformation of death into life, in endings transformed into beginnings, and in dead-ends that become a source for new possibilities. There is much here for us to reflect on as we approach the 12 month mark of this global pandemic where many have died and many have suffered. Our world is much more connected than we ever imagined. We are our brother's keeper.

This is the sacred center of our faith—the truth made manifest in Jesus Christ—that God is in each and every one of us, quietly transforming us and the world. In his pain and suffering, Jesus speaks to every pain and loss you have endured and offers you the promise of transformation. It's an old story, but it still has the power to reveal, to heal, and to redeem. Jesus is at the heart of our faith, in the depth of our souls. He is waiting for us, inviting us to leave ordinary time and follow along with him on the journey that brought him to the Cross. Listen in silence, for Jesus is calling you.

*(Silent time.)*

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of ongoing inequity in Canada: We lament racial inequity and the necessity for a Black lives matter movement . We recognize the blindness of a government that denies systemic racism. We lament gender inequity and sexual harassment and remember the MeToo movement, We lament the subjugation of one race over another , one sex over another. Equity starts with respect. We are our brother's keeper. *(A candle is extinguished.)*

### **Prayer of Reflection:**

Loving God, as we journey through this holy season of Lent, give us strength and courage to make the changes that are needed in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to your steadfast presence and help us to put our trust in you. I pray using the words Jesus gave to his disciples; *Our Father, who art in heaven...*

### **Blessing & Commissioning**

May the path that Christ walks to bring justice upon the earth, to bring light to those who sit in shadows, to bring out those who live in servitude, and to bring new things to all creation, may this path run through our lives. May I be the road Christ takes. Amen.

### **Hymn: (VU651) Guide me, O thou great Jehovah**

Guide me, O my great Redeemer,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but you are mighty;  
hold me with your powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore,  
feed me now and evermore.  
Open now the crystal fountain,  
where the healing waters flow.  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through.  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
ever be my strength and shield,  
ever be my strength and shield.  
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 sing to you, I will ever sing to you.

Prayers by:

OP: John Moses, Gathering Lent 2021 (Year B), pg.30.

CM: Rev. Lee Ann Hogle, Beulah United-St Paul's United-Georgeville United, Lent 2021.

PI: Laura Turnbull, Gathering Lent 2021 (Year B), pg.37.

BC: Aaron Palmer , Gathering Lent 2021 (Year B), pg.37.