

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

A service for personal meditations at home
Lent 2021 (week 4)

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 Gospel of John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

The Living Word, I listen with my heart, my mind and my spirit.

Candle Meditation:

It's a new week. Last week, with all its demands, is over. The coming week, with yet another round of challenges and demands, is not quite here. I invite you to close your eyes and be in the moment. No matter where you are in your thoughts and feelings—relieved about what you have accomplished, anxious about what's left undone, concerned about people or projects—no matter where you are in your journey this day—I encourage you to set all that aside and consider where you are right now. Whatever is true for you right now, in this moment, whether it be joy or sadness, gratitude or anxiety, let it come forward. When it is fully present, then listen . . . for God is present in these moments, too. God meets you where you are and calls you forward, moment by moment, guiding you slowly but surely toward transformation.

(Silent time.)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of economic inequity. We live in a capitalist society that encourages innovation and productivity but rewards disproportionately those who already have power and wealth . We lament that low-income families, and our service industry workers are the ones that risk the most and suffer the most from quarantines and lockdowns. Our democracy is only as strong as the respect shown to all its citizens. We are our brother's keeper.

(A candle is extinguished.)

Prayer of Reflection:

Loving God, we thank you that you are with us, and that we may call upon you no matter where we are, or what we are feeling. Keep us mindful of your presence and trusting in your promise—that you are working with us in the moment-by-moment unfolding of our lives. 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: (VU333) Love divine, all loves excelling

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,
unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver;
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more 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.

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.

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.