

BELLS CORNERS UNITED CHURCH
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT / AGM March 5, 2023

*Indicates stand as able

* *The live service will be broadcasted and recorded on YouTube, check your email for the link.*

Acknowledgement of Territory:

Rev. Lorrie Lowes

(Jamie Miller, Gathering, ACE 2022/2023 Year A. Used with permission.)

As we begin our worship service, we acknowledge that we are gathered on the unceded lands of the Algonquin-Anishinaabe peoples. For thousands of years, they have cared for the land even as the land cared for them. Guided by the wisdom of their traditions and their ancestors, they have been taught that the circle of life is embraced and embracing. Let us carry on this wisdom. Let us live into right relations with love and respect.

***Opening Hymn: Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights – Voices United #108**

1 Throughout these Lenten days and nights
we turn to walk the inward way,
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,
we live in hope till Easter Day.

4 And though the road is hard and steep,
the Spirit ever calls us on
through Calvary's dying, dark and deep,
until we see the coming Dawn.

2 The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,
who found in weakness greater power,
embraces us, though lost and flawed,
and leads us to his Rising Hour.

5 So let us choose the path of One
who wore, for us, the crown of thorn,
and slept in death that we might wake
to life on Resurrection Morn!

3 We bear the silence, cross and pain
of human burdens, human strife,
while sisters, brothers help sustain
our courage till the Feast of Life.

6 Rejoice, O sons and daughters!
Sing and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings
on Easter Day will rise again!

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Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Acolytes: Crowe- Morris Family

We give thanks for the light of Christ,
sign of God's love in the world, our guide in this season of Lent.
Through the warmth of this light,
let us celebrate God's presence among us as we brighten the world.

Sung Response: Don't Be Afraid - More Voices #90

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger, my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger and I have promised, promised to be always near.

Welcome & Centering for Worship

Rev. Kim Vidal

Good morning! I welcome and greet you in the name of Jesus Christ on this Second Sunday in Lent. Today is our Annual General Meeting shortly after the service. We are glad you have come today. Join us for coffee and fellowship after the service in the main hall.

Announcements...

Friends, in this season of Lent, we know what God desires of us:
that we love one another as God has first loved us.
We gather this morning to remind each other about that love.

Call to Gather: (Responsively)

Rev. Lorrie Lowes

(Inspired by the Call to Worship of Louise Mahood, Gathering, Lent/Easter 2014. Used with permission)

God invites us into this place of safety and care.

God invites us by name with love.

Jesus invites Nicodemus to be born of water and spirit.

Jesus invites us to explore what is new to us.

Let us worship God in the Spirit of transition.

Let us worship God in the Spirit of today.

Prayer of Confession: (Unison)

Rev. Lorrie

(An excerpt from Wendy Maclean's "Inspiratio", Gathering, LE 2022. Used with permission)

Holy God, Creator, Redeemer and Guide,

we come before you in prayer, in praise and in quietness.

May we welcome your holy presence among us and within us.

Inspire our minds that we might hear your Word.

Lift our voices that we might praise you.

Quieten our souls that we might find you.

**Forgive us the many times we listen to the noise and clamour
of the world above your voice;**

the times we complain rather than give you thanks;

the times we are too preoccupied to be still.

Holy One, grant us the wisdom to listen for your voice

and to follow in your Way. Amen. *A Moment of Silence*

Special Music: There's a Spirit in the Air – Wren/Strathdee Bell Canto director : Erin

Time for the Young at Heart:

Rev. Lorrie

SOSA Lenten Project Video: <https://youtu.be/s11ehWq6iRE>

The Prayer of Jesus / The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: O God, Send Out Your Spirit - More Voices #25

Refrain: O God, send out your Spirit; renew the face of the earth. (2x)

1. We bless you, O God, for you are so great.
Your Spirit uncovers hidden beauty and grace.
Though times we deny all the pain and the tears,
Your Spirit empowers us and soon we face our fears. *Refrain:*
2. Ev'ry prayer we pray, sacred word, sacred rite,
is for the ones who are left waiting outside.
Ev'ry sermon we preach, ev'ry Spirit-filled tune;
Love says, "Remember why we do the things we do." *Refrain:*

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Prayer for Illumination:

Reader: Simon Linforth

We come to your Word, O God, seeking inspiration, courage, and possibility.

Open our eyes, our mind and our heart to see the truth in your Word. Amen.

The Reading: John 3: 1-17 (NRSV Updated Edition) Nicodemus Visits Jesus

3 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe; how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ “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. ¹⁷ “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.

May the Spirit of Love and Wisdom dwell where the Word is spoken. **Thanks be to God!**

Ministry of Music: God So Loved the World - Stainer BCUC Choir

Sermon: “Nicodemus” Rev. Kim

Prayers of the People: Rev. Kim

Let us gather our hearts in prayer.

God of light and darkness, like Nicodemus at night, we come as needy people. Our hearts hunger for love. Our minds thirst for peace. Our dry spirits long to be watered by your grace. In times when certainties are few and difficult, keep us mindful of your faithfulness. In times when we see hopelessness around us, fill us with your light so we can be witnesses of your love to the world.

Companion God, on this our Annual General Meeting, give our church vision, commitment, and passion for the gospel. Strengthen our ministries, our leaders, our life together. We pray for our faith communities as we move to new projects and endeavours. Help us to welcome the gifts of those in our midst, and to dedicate our own gifts to you. Inspire others to see in us the reflection of your glory and to hear from us the good news of your love.

Sheltering God, we cry out for homes that are nurturing and safe. We want to be families who are free of domestic violence and neglect, where all the children can grow without fear. Empower us to make your love a reality in every home we know.

Suffering God, who knew the pain and humiliation of the cross, we pray for all who suffer, for the sick and the lonely, for those who have suffered loss, for those trapped in anxiety and fear, for those downtrodden by hopelessness and despair. We pray for those lifted up in our prayer chalice and those of us who yearn for your healing touch. We pray for those who walk beside us on our journey, whose lives are a blessing to us.

God of love, we pray for the world – especially for all those caught in the many kinds of devastation and acts of violence, those who grieve for families and friends dead or missing, and those who struggle to respond in the face of great challenges.

We pray for ourselves and those close to our hearts. We come before you O God, thirsty, empty and afraid. We have crosses to carry and wounds that need healing. We have hard, moral choices to make and promises to keep. Uphold us and enfold us. Empower us with your Spirit and give us living water for the journey. These we ask in the spirit of Jesus, our wisdom teacher. Amen.

Invitation to Offer: Rev. Kim

I now invite you to offer your time, talents and treasures as a sign of our gratefulness to God's blessings. you will find the offering plates on the narthex table. There are many additional ways you can financially support the work of the church – through PAR, by dropping into the office or by e-transfer. Thank you for your continued love and support of Bells Corners United Church.

***Offertory Hymn: When I Survey The Wondrous Cross – Voices United #149 (v4)**

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small:
love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

***Offertory Prayer: (Unison)**

**Lenten God, as we look at the cross we wonder what is before us.
We know that, for some, it is a journey of hunger and loneliness.
So, it is that we share these offerings with love.
Receive them and bless them in Jesus' name. Amen.**

***Hymn: Spirit God, Be Our Breath – More Voices #150**

1.Spirit God: be our breath, be our song.
Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.
Our world seems inward, defensive, withdrawn.
Spirit God, be our song.

2.Patient God: soothe our pride, calm our fear.
Comfort us. When we know you are near
we grow more certain, our vision is clear.
Patient God, calm our fear.

3.Loving God: be our voice, be our prayer.
Reaching out, joining hands as we share,
we seek your guidance through friendship and care.
Loving God, be our prayer.

4.Spirit God: be our breath, be our song.
Blow through us, bringing strength to move on.
Through change, through challenge, we'll greet the
new dawn. Spirit God, be our song.

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Sending Forth: (Responsively) Rev. Kim (Rt. Rev. Richard Bott, Gathering, LE 2020. Used with permission)

Every breath that is breathed, **every beat of the heart,**
every smile and tear, **is a prayer.**
May we find healing, **may we find hope,**
may we find God, **in the tears, in the smiles, the beats and the breaths,**
in every moment that was, **every moment that is,**
every moment to come. **Amen.**

Sung Blessing: Depart in Peace words: Ruth Duck , music: Ron Klusmeier

Depart in peace to do God's will; Walk ever in the light;
For Christ is with you ever more, To guide you day and night.
A-men, A-men, A-men, A-men.