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Palm/Passion Sunday and Communion, March 24, 2024

Pianist/Accompanist: Michael Oddy  
Song Leader: Brian Stocks  
Singing Bowl: Wilma Stewart/Sandi McDonald  
Reader: Marion Overholt  
Audio-Visual: Norm Barnoff; Jeanne Stocks  
YouTube Editor, Harold Barnoff  
Property: Garry Derbowka  
Bulletin: Rose Barkhouse  
Gift of Music: The Westminster Singers

Minister: Rev. Del Stewart

\*indicates please stand, if able

## **WE GATHER IN THIS SACRED SPACE**

Musical Prelude

### **Westminster's Mission Statement**

Westminster United Church is an inclusive church for Progressive Christians...  
creating something beautiful for God.

### **Acknowledgement of Territory**

Westminster United Church sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex Peninsula and the straits – *les detroits* – of Detroit.

## **Welcome & Announcements**

### **Entry Into Palm Sunday Celebration (Min)**

For the past five weeks of the Lenten Season we have been preparing for this moment in the story of Jesus' journey. Now we are one week from Easter.

#### ***Quiet Reflection***

According to our Christian tradition, today – Palm Sunday - marks the day Jesus entered Jerusalem...just a few days before his death. The gospel stories tell us that as he made his way into the Holy City, riding on a donkey, the crowds shouted joyous blessings and heartfelt hosannas. The gospel stories tell us too that the people waved 'palm' branches, and spread their cloaks on the road.

#### ***Quiet Reflection***

But that's not the whole story. According to our Christian tradition - today is also Passion Sunday – the day we solemnly remember, and reflect on the meaning and significance, of the biblical accounts of Jesus' arrest and interrogation...his pain and suffering...his enduring and his dying.

#### ***Quiet Reflection***

**Hymn:** VU 127, Ride On, Ride On in Majesty (TUNE: Winchester VU 100)

### **Opening Reflections (Min)**

Jesus dared to live God's way in the midst of all the 'ups' and 'downs' of human life.

We too are called to proclaim our discipleship faithfully - by the way we live, and the way we treat each other.

### ***Quiet Reflection***

Jesus wanted his disciples to live passionate, justice-seeking, God-centred lives.

### ***Quiet Reflection***

Jesus, the human face of God, shared his life so that others might sense new signs of hope in their everyday lives.

### ***Quiet Reflection***

**Hymn:** More Voices #33, Jesus Came Bringing Us Hope  
(\*\*NOTE to Michael: one verse ONLY - \*hope)

**A Palm Sunday Litany: "Waving the Palms"** (Palm A.2.4.2023  
— Rex A E Hunt, [rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com](http://rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com), *adapted*) –  
**Responsive**

Min: Palm Sunday is found,

All: whenever we are seeking to uplift the fallen,  
to comfort the brokenhearted,

to strengthen the weak and hopeless.

Min: Palm Sunday is found,

All: whenever we are working bravely and persistently  
in the face of abuse and criticism  
to establish more equitable relations in the world.

Min: Palm Sunday is found,

All: whenever we are sacrificing our lives on behalf of what we  
believe  
to be the service of loving compassion for all humanity.

Min: Yes, indeed, that is Palm Sunday!

**Hymn:** VU #122, All Glory Laud and Honour

## **READINGS FROM OUR FAITH TRADITIONS (Marion Overholt)**

### **From the New Testament**

#### **First Gospel Reading**

##### **Mark 11:1-11 Jesus Enters Jerusalem (Inclusive Bible)**

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent off two of his disciples with this instruction: "Go to the village straight ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it you will find tethered there a colt on which no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it back. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'The Rabbi needs it, but will send it back very soon'."

So they went off, and finding a colt out on a street near a gate, they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them. "What do you mean by untying the colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them take it.

They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks across its back, and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And everyone around Jesus, in front or in back of him, cried out,

*Hosanna!*

*Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God!*

*Blessed is the coming reign of our ancestor David!*

*Hosanna in the highest!*

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple precincts. He inspected everything there, but since it was already late in the afternoon, he went out to Bethany accompanied by the Twelve.

### **A Contemporary Palm Sunday Reading**

**"The Poet Thinks about the Donkey"** - a poem by Mary Oliver  
(SALT, Progressive Christian Blog, March 28, 2023)

On the outskirts of Jerusalem  
the donkey waited.

Not especially brave, or filled with understanding,  
he stood and waited.

*How horses, turned out into the meadow,  
leap with delight!*

*How doves, released from their cages,  
clatter away, splashed with sunlight.*

But the donkey, tied to a tree as usual, waited.  
Then he let himself be led away.  
Then he let the stranger mount.

Never had he seen such crowds!  
And I wonder if he at all imagined what was to happen.  
Still, he was what he had always been: small, dark, obedient.

I hope, finally, he felt brave.  
I hope, finally, he loved the man who rode so lightly upon him, as  
he lifted one dusty hoof and stepped, as he had to,  
forward.

## **Second Gospel Reading**

### **Mark 14:12-26 The Passover with His Disciples (Inclusive Bible)**

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the paschal lamb, the disciples said to Jesus, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover supper for you?"

He directed two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and you will come upon a man carrying a water jar. Follow him into a house he enters and say, 'The Teacher asks, 'Where is my guest room? I want to eat the Passover meal there with my disciples'. Then you will be shown an upstairs room, spacious, furnished, with everything in order. That is the place you are to get ready for us.'"

Then the disciples went off. When they reached the city, they found it just as Jesus had told them, and they prepared the Passover supper.

As it grew dark, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. They reclined at table, and in the course of the meal Jesus said, “The truth is, one of you is about to betray me – one who is eating with me.” They were very upset at these words, and one by one they said to him, “Surely it’s not me!”

Jesus replied, “It is one of you Twelve – one who dips into the dish with me. The Chosen One is going the way the scriptures foretell. But woe to the one by whom the Chosen One is betrayed! It were better had that person never been born.”

During the meal took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “Take this and eat. This is my body. This is my body.” He likewise took a cup, gave thanks and passed it to them, and they all drank from it. Jesus said to them, “This is my blood, the blood of the Covenant, which will be poured out for many. The truth is, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.”

After singing songs of praise, they walked out to the Mount of Olives.

### **Refections on Today’s Readings (Responsive)**

Min: May our hearts and minds be open to the wisdom of these texts from our faith traditions, both ancient and modern.

People: And may our hearts and minds be fertile soil in which wisdom may grow and thrive...

**Centering:** Let us centre our minds, our hearts and our lives as we listen to our pianist, Michael Oddy, play this meditation

**Sermon:** It All Began With a Bit of Bread (Rev. Del Stewart)

## **OUR RESPONSIVE CELEBRATIONS**

**The Westminster Singers:** Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

**Pastoral Prayers - Responsive**

Min: On this Holy Day – on this Palm and Passion Sunday - we have come to this sacred place, bringing our joys and concerns. So, at this time, let us quietly reflect on those joys and concerns...

### ***Quiet Reflection***

Min: As one heart is lifted,

People: May we share its celebration.

Min: As one heart is burdened,

People: May we share the pain it knows...

### **The Lord's Prayer - Unison**

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.

## **WE PRESENT OUR GIFTS AND OFFERINGS**

**Invitation** (Kristin Collins, <https://www.uua.org>, *adapted*)

This morning, as we present our gifts and offerings, let us remember

“We give to remind ourselves how many gifts we have to offer.  
We give to remember that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

We give because we believe in music and sacred space.

We give with the faith that, together, we have enough to make a difference.”

**Offertory Hymn:** MV 191, What Can I Do (please feel free to clap along)

**Offertory Prayer:** (<https://carolpenner.typepad.com>, *adapted*)  
(Min)

God we remember that on the first Palm Sunday  
the crowds offered Jesus their coats to walk on,  
and they waved leafy branches honouring his presence.  
Today we honour the living presence of our Companion Jesus  
with our faithful gifts and offerings.  
And now God, we present to you these humble tokens of love  
expressing our affection for and commitment to  
the Chosen One who entered Jerusalem  
and later shared a Passover Supper with his disciples and friends.  
Amen.

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**\*\*\*NOTE TO ROSE – KINDLY USE COLOURED PAPER FOR THE REST OF THIS LITURGY...i.e. from here until the end of this worship service. THANKS**

## **A PALM/PASSION SUNDAY CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION**

### **THE PEACE**

Min: May a heart of peace rest with you.

People: And also with you.

### **THE INVITATION (Min)**

Here today, through bread and wine, we renew our unity with one another, and all who have gone before us . And here today, through bread and wine, we renew our communion with Mother Earth, with one another, and with the broken ones of the world.

### **THE STORY (Min)**

Our faith-tradition tells us this story:

Long ago, on the night of his arrest, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it; after which he said, **THIS BREAD IS BROKEN AS MY BODY WILL BE**. Then he handed the bread to his friends, inviting them to eat, and to **REMEMBER ALL THAT I HAVE BEEN TO YOU**.

Long ago, on that same night, Jesus poured a cup of wine, offered thanks for it, and gave it to his friends. He said to them, **THIS WINE IS POURED OUT, AS MY LIFE WILL BE**. **REMEMBER ME AND GIVE THANKS FOR ALL I HAVE GIVEN**.

### **PRAYER of THANKSGIVING - Responsive**

Min: Creativity-God, Source of Life, we give thanks

All: For all gifts simple and profound, in country and city.

Min: We who hold all such good things in trust join in the praise of all people:

All: Holy! Holy! Holy! Heaven and earth are holy and good.

Min: Holy is peace.

All: Holy is truth. Holy is love.

Min: In this season of transition – when the sun warms the earth, the ice melts, the snow disappears, and the days lengthen... and when budding trees and all the signs of spring begin to appear –

All: We are reminded once again that new possibilities can arise from what has come to an end, and from our failures and disappointments.

Min: We give thanks for all the influences in our lives that have helped us see beyond the present – those influences that teach us to combine labour and rest... those influences that bring us cycles of time and season, that sustain us when we are in need.

All: God loves in us; God loves through us; God laughs and cries in us, as nowhere else.

Min: Especially, we give thanks for Jesus of Nazareth – gatherer of people, breaker of bread, pourer of wine, weaver of lives.

In his life, wisdom, stories and social vision we recall the words he spoke and the actions he took,  
which call forth in us respect for one another and the earth...  
loving compassion...and an insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst for justice in this world.

All: We believe the same Spirit of God that came to visibility in Jesus also yearns for visible expression in us, through us, and by us.

**Communion Hymn:** VU # 459, vs 1-3, Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face

## **BREAD AND WINE (Min)**

Today - on this day which is known in our faith tradition as Palm Sunday - we too take the bread and wine...

*(The Bread is broken...the Wine is poured – in SILENCE)*

Bread broken...Wine poured out...for the life of the world.

Come, taste this same bread and wine...gifts of the earth...work of human hands.

## **The Action**

**The Bread:** Bread for your body. Take and eat. *(The bread is eaten)*

**The Wine:** Wine for your journey. Take and drink. *(The wine is tasted)*

## **Post-Communion Prayer**

Min: We give thanks for this sacred place, and what we have done here today.

People: And now, we return to our daily lives, renewed and enlivened.

**Closing Hymn:** VU 459, vs 4 &5, Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face

**Parting Words** – (<https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com>, adapted) - **Responsive**

Min: As we prepare to leave this sacred place, let us commit ourselves to taking on this week's life with renewed hope and imagination...

### ***Quiet Reflection***

Min: May our life's journeys

All: Shine like a star.

Min: May our days and our years

All: Weave together a wonderful tapestry.

Min: May our unfolding stories

All: Dance with the grace of every blessing.

**WORDS OF BLESSING** ([rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com](https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com), adapted) - **Min**

May beauty delight you.  
May tenderness cocoon you.

May love nurture you...

**Choral Sending Forth:** VU 967, Amen.

**Musical Postlude:** You are invited to be seated, listen to and enjoy our pianist, Michael Oddy, playing this morning's Postlude