



**March 5, 2023**

<p>Melville United Church          300 St. Andrew Street West, Fergus, ON N1M 1N9          Mailing address: PO Box 41, Fergus, ON N1M 2W7          519-843-1781</p>	
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**Melville United Church**  
**March 5, 2023**  
**Second Sunday of Lent**

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Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

### **Welcome**

I greet you in the name of the one whom God, in love, gave to the world, Jesus the Christ.

We gather in community today – March 5, 2023 virtually and in person. We will continue to offer both in-person and on-line services with printed copies being distributed to those without internet access who are unable to attend in person. We encourage people to come out to worship in the sanctuary. There is ample room to socially distance, and you are welcome to wear masks or not as is comfortable for you.

For those who are joining us online or by reading, we invite you to have a candle or tea light available.

We gather on this second Sunday of Lent, during which the colour of purple is used. Purple is a cool colour on the colour wheel, reflecting divinity, wisdom, dignity, mystery, and creativity. Dark purple is a penitential colour, evoking sadness and deep reflection. In the first century CE, purple dye was very hard to come by, so only the wealthy could afford purple garments.

### **Announcements**

- **The organ needs your help.** Our beautiful Melville pipe organ is in need of repair. We have carefully completed repairs and general maintenance. As you are aware things break. There have been issues with the Swell expression for several years now. At this time the Swell expression is beyond repair and needs to be updated and replaced with a new louvre drive motor. The cost to restore the Swell expression with a new motor will be \$3000.00. Please consider making a donation for this very worthwhile project in order for Melville to continue enjoying this wonderful organ. For the many ways to donate, please consult the Melville web site. For further information contact Ralph Rainford 519 843-3841. Thank you for helping.
- People continue to suffer as a result of the earthquakes that struck **southern Türkiye (Turkey) near the border with Syria**. People need emergency shelter, blankets, mattresses, clean water, food, and hygiene items. We join Mission & Service partners the Middle East Council of Churches, ACT Alliance, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and the Humanitarian Coalition to show tangible support for the people of Türkiye and Syria. You can be a part of these efforts by donating now at <https://united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/earthquake-turkiye>. Thank you for your generosity.
- **“MID-DAY MUSIC AT MELVILLE” presented and performed by pianist BRAD HALLS**  
*“Mid-Day Music at Melville”* returns on Wednesday, March 8 from 12 noon to about 1:00 p.m. at Melville United Church in Fergus, when pianist Brad Halls will present songs written by two great hit songwriters from the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – composers Sammy Fain and Burton Lane. Sammy Fain is two-time Oscar winner for songs like Secret Love, Love Is a Many Splendored Thing, I’ll Be Seeing You and more. Burton Lane was the creator of the Broadway hit Finian’s Rainbow and songs like How About You, I Hear Music and Too Late Now. There is absolutely no admission fee for the performance, but a voluntary contribution to Melville to keep the heat and lights on and the piano tuned is always welcome.

- **VON invites you to join SMART (Seniors Maintaining Active Roles Together) Gentle Exercise Program Classes** at Melville **Tuesday and Thursday at 9:30 am** as there are available spots. The 10:30 class is fully booked. Call Danielle to register 519-803-0144.
- **Friday or Sunday Coffee Time** – We encourage people to sign up to host either a Friday or a Sunday Coffee Time. It is not difficult! We'd be pleased to show you how. Sign-up sheets are at the Parlour Door. Please speak to Lorna Bevcar or Marg Frayne.
- **Donations to Garage Sales:** If you know of anyone moving, down-sizing or de-cluttering, please keep Melville and our Garage Sales in mind.
- As more and more people find their dollar shrinking, and having to decide between rent and three meals a day, the demand for food bank assistance rises. We ask you to prayerfully consider if you are able to **support the Food Bank**, either with a donation of food, or financially. Food bank use is up 35% over the last three years. The food bank has also calculated that a basket of food and goods that cost \$39.85 in 2021 now costs \$50.83, a 27.55% increase in one year. The Food Bank is asking for your financial support at this challenging time.

**Most needed items** (as of March 2<sup>nd</sup>):

Pasta Sauce	Mac & Cheese Side Dishes	Chunky Soup (Habitant)
Small Canned Soup	Pasta Side Dishes	Canned Vegetables
Cold Cereal	Peanut Butter Juice	Jam
		Canned Salmon

**Well-stocked with:**

Pasta	Spaghetti	Tomato Soup	Canned Chickpeas and Lentils
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- **Save your Used Stamps from Incoming Mail:** Cut off your used stamps, leaving a 1/2" border around them and give them to Marlene Tosh or put them in the Stamp Box on the shelf in the Cloak Room, where the Lift is on the main floor of the church. Marlene tidies them up and takes them to the Bible Society, to buy bibles. You can do this year-round!
- **Gifts with Vision: A Giving Catalogue from The United Church of Canada**
  - Give meaningful gifts that make a difference with [Gifts with Vision \(opens in a new tab\)](#)! Each year's gift catalogue gives a glimpse of the breadth of our Mission & Service ministries and programs.
  - *Gifts with Vision* has gift ideas to suit every interest, budget, and person. It's a great way to celebrate special occasions and honour loved ones!
  - The gift catalogue is updated online regularly, and is fully refreshed every fall. It is also distributed in print with *Broadview* magazine, and mailed to each pastoral charge.
  - **To order gifts, be inspired, or learn more, visit [GiftsWithVision.ca \(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.giftswithvision.ca) today!**

I invite you to join us now for a time of worship and contemplation.

**Land Acknowledgement** *Peter Chynoweth, **Gathering: Pentecost 1 2022**, p.33. Used with permission.*

We acknowledge that this land on which we gather for worship is the traditional land of the people of Petun,

Haudenosaunee, (Hoe-day-no-show-nee)

Anishinabewaki,

Mississaugas of the Credit,

Odawa and

Mississauga nations.

We acknowledge that we live on this land as people who have agreed to share the care and use of this land as a result of treaties—the Simcoe Patent-Treaty 4, 1793 and the Haldimand Treaty,

1784—that outline the rights and responsibilities associated with our place in this land. May we be people who remember this with thanksgiving and respect.

**Lenten Tenebrae** *Won Hur, Gathering: Lent/Easter 2023, p.66-68, alt. Used with permission.*

*(If you are watching this on-line or reading it from a page I invite you to take a moment to light a candle, centre yourself and prepare to enter in to a time of worship and prayer. As you light your candle repeat the following words)*

*Five candles are lit, as well as the Christ candle.*

We live unaware of the spiritual realities around us.

**We fail to grasp the reality of God's presence in our world.**

Like Nicodemus, we cannot grasp the kin-dom of God.

**Thus, we muddle through life, suffering the consequences of our lack of attentiveness.**

Thus, we bear the impact of climate change in the pursuit of economic gains.

**We live with enormous amounts of plastic waste in the name of convenience.**

We live with micro-aggressions and systemic racism.

**We mourn our ignorance and under-developed religious beliefs.**

*The second candle is extinguished.*

**Response: Don't Be Afraid**

**MV90**

**OneLicense #A-740237**

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.

Let us pray.

**O God, we pray to be born anew,**

**in order to grasp the meaning of your kin-dom.**

**We long to discover our authentic selves**

**as we shed our false selves in this Lenten season.**

**May your truth set us free.**

**May we abide in your spirit of truth**

**so that we can live a life worthy of eternity. Amen.**

**Hymn: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy**

**VU271**

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy

like the wideness of the sea;

there's a kindness in God's justice

which is more than liberty.

2 There is no place where earth's sorrows

are more felt than up in heaven;

there is no place where earth's failings

have such gracious judgement given.

3 There is plentiful redemption

in the blood that Christ has shed;

there is joy for all the members

in the sorrows of the Head.

- 4 Troubled souls, why will you scatter  
like a crowd of frightened sheep?  
Foolish hearts, why will you wander  
from a love so true and deep?
- 5 For the love of God is broader  
than the measures of the mind,  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.

**Call to Reconciliation** *Beth W. Johnston, **Gathering: Lent/Easter 2023**, p.33, alt. Used with permission.*

In this season of Lent, it seems even more important than ever to draw near to God in confession, seeking restoration and the opportunity to begin again. Let us open our hearts in confession, sharing in the prayer seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

**Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation (in unison)** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1, alt.** Copyright 2013.*

**Gracious God, we come before you  
in need of forgiveness and grace.  
You call us to trust in you completely,  
but we do not.  
We are timid and fearful as we follow your lead.  
We justify our actions and words,  
though we know they are not what you require.  
We struggle to understand the new life Christ offers,  
preferring old habits to risky change.  
Forgive us, we pray.  
Help us to be born again into the life of Christ,  
trusting that you have included us by grace  
in the family of faith.  
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A Volume 1**. Copyright 2013.*

Friends, God is for us and not against us!  
For that very reason,  
God sent the Son into the world  
not to condemn the world,  
but that the world might be saved through him.  
Believe the good news,  
in Jesus Christ we are forgiven!  
**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## Children's Ministry: Moving

Have any of you ever moved? Have you moved to a new house and maybe had to go to a new school.

When I was a kid, I moved when I was 5 years old, just before I started kindergarten. I had to leave behind friends, and move to a different neighbourhood, and go to a different school than the one I had toured, where I met the teacher I would have had. I was very focused on the new house we moved to, which was much older than the one we had left, and it had a great big tree in the front yard. I remember many of the pictures I drew in the new kindergarten were of our house, as I tried to get comfortable with this new space.

Sarah and Abraham from the Bible moved too. Abraham was 75 years old (as old as your grandparents or great-grandparents). That seems way to old to be moving! Aside from their age, one big difference was they had to **walk** to their new home. And it was a long, long way from where they first lived. Another big difference was that they lived together with their parents and brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and cousins. God asked them to move away from their whole family. And perhaps the hardest part for Abraham and Sarah, was that they didn't know where they were moving to. God said God would show them the way and tell them when to stop. They had to have a lot of faith in God to just go and keep moving until God told them to stop.

Our faith can help us feel safe and secure when we are going into the unknown, doing something scary or that we might not fully understand. We can be comforted by knowing that God goes with us always.

## Prayer/Blessing

**Hymn: Behold, Behold MV115**

**OneLicense #A-740237**

Behold, (behold,) behold, (behold,)  
I make all things new,  
beginning with you and starting from today.

Behold, (behold,) behold, (behold,)  
I make all things new,  
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

**Prayer of Illumination** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**<sup>®</sup>  
**Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1.** Copyright 2013, alt..*

God of signs and wonders,  
we come to your word again and again,  
seeking understanding  
and the new life it offers.  
By the power of your Holy Spirit,  
illumine our hearts and minds  
so that we may believe this testimony  
and have eternal life.  
In the name of Jesus Christ,  
our teacher and Savior, we pray. **Amen.**

**Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4a** (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*)

*God calls Abram to be a blessing*

YHWH said to Abram,  
“Leave your country, your people,  
and the home of your parents,  
and go to a place I will show you.  
I will make of you a great people.  
I will bless you and make your name so great  
that it will be used in blessings.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and I will curse those who curse you.  
And all the people on the face of the earth  
will be blessed through you.”

Abram, who was 75 years old when he left Haran,  
began the journey as YHWH had instructed

**Ministry of Music** “When I Can Read My Title Clear” - *based on the Scottish tune, Pisgah, from Kentucky Harmony, arranged by John Innes*

**Scripture: John 3:1-17** (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*)

*Nicodemus learns that “God so loved the world”*

A certain Pharisee named Nicodemus,  
a member of the Sanhedrin,  
came to Jesus at night.  
“Rabbi,” he said “we know you’re a teacher come from God,  
for no one can perform the signs and wonders you do  
unless by the powers of God.”  
Jesus gave Nicodemus this answer:  
“The truth of the matter is,  
unless one is born from above,  
one cannot see the kin-dom of God.”  
Nicodemus said, “How can an adult be born a second time?  
I can’t go back into my mother’s womb to be born again!”  
Jesus replied:

“The truth of the matter is,  
no one can enter God’s kin-dom  
without being born of water and the Spirit.  
What is born of the flesh is flesh;  
what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.  
So don’t be surprised when I tell you that  
you must be born from above.  
The wind blows where it will.  
You hear the sound it makes,  
but you don’t know where it comes from  
or where it goes.  
So it is with everyone  
who is born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be possible?” asked Nicodemus.  
Jesus replied, “You’re a teacher of Israel,  
and you  
still don’t understand these matters?

“The truth of the matter is,  
we’re talking about what we know;  
we’re testifying about what we’ve seen—  
yet you don’t accept our testimony.  
If you don’t believe  
when I tell you about earthly things,  
how will you believe  
when I tell you about heavenly things?  
No one has gone up to heaven  
except the One who came down from heaven—  
the Chosen One.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
so the Chosen One must be lifted up,  
so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One  
might have eternal life.

Yes, God so love the world  
as to give the Only Begotten One,  
that whoever believes may not die,  
but have eternal life.

God sent the Only Begotten into the world  
not to condemn the world,  
but that through the Only Begotten  
the world might be saved.

**Prayer** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word®** Worship Companion:  
Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1. Copyright 2013.*

God our helper,  
our shade, our protector,  
you are able to give life to the dead,  
to call into being things that do not exist.  
We trust in your power  
to make all things new;  
to keep us in sunlight and moonlight,  
along rocky paths and pathways unknown;  
until all our going and coming brings us at last  
to your kingdom promised in Christ,  
in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

May the words I speak and the reflection that we all share  
find a response that is worthy of you,  
most Just, most Loving, and most Compassionate God. Amen.

**David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.**



## Reflection: Where the Wind Blows

It's been a week or two, and so I share this morning the words of one of my favourite Christian writers, Debie Thomas, at the website Journey with Jesus

<https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2548-where-the-wind-blows>

John 3:16 was the first Bible verse I memorized as a child. In Sunday School, I learned that it's essentially Christianity 101 — a simple formula for faith, a handy evangelism tool, and a perfect summary of the Good News. Over the years, I've seen the verse displayed on billboards, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and cross-stitch samplers. Martin Luther called it "the heart of the Bible, the Gospel in miniature."

And so it is. On this second Sunday of Lent, as we consider Jesus's lengthy, nighttime encounter with Nicodemus, John 3:16 jumps out of their perplexing dialogue for its efficiency and pithiness. In just twenty-seven words, the verse describes a loving God, a cherished world, a self-giving Son, a universal invitation, a deliverance from death, and a promise of eternal life. Christianity in a nutshell, right?

Well, I'm not so sure. The problem is not in the verse itself, but in what the Church so often does with it. In our well-intentioned efforts to make the Gospel message accessible and palatable, we Christians sometimes reduce salvation to a soundbite, forgetting that when Jesus originally spoke the words to Nicodemus — a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and likely one of the more learned men of his day — his listener found Jesus's words incomprehensible. "How can these things be?" Nicodemus asked in astonishment, when Jesus spoke to him in the obscure and metaphorical language of birth, flesh, water, and spirit. But Jesus, unfazed by the Pharisee's confusion, refused to simplify his explanation. If he intended to "save" Nicodemus quickly and easily that night, he failed. What the seeker experienced was not salvation; it was bewilderment.

If Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus is representative of God's preferred "evangelism style," than I have to wonder: what does my more formulaic approach to Christianity leave out? Am I so invested in keeping the faith cozy and comfortable that I minimize its weirdness? Its otherness? Its offensiveness? Jesus had no problem leaving Nicodemus confused and muddled. He was in no hurry to get Nicodemus to sign on the dotted line. The Spirit "blows where it chooses," Jesus said. The Spirit cannot be caged or contained. Which means the journey of faith and the workings of salvation can't be caged or contained, either. When we speak of God's kingdom, we are in a realm of deep mystery. It's okay to be surprised. It's okay to be stricken. It's okay to take our time.

After all, what Jesus was offering Nicodemus was not a tune-up, or a few minor tweaks to an already near-perfect life; it was a brand new life. A new birth. A fresh, down to the foundations beginning. What newborn enters the world without birth pangs, shock, disorientation, or pain? Downright bewilderment isn't the exception in a birth story; it's the rule. If we don't find Christianity at least a little bit confusing, then perhaps it's not Christianity we're practicing.

As I sit with Nicodemus's baffled reaction to Jesus, here's what I'm asking myself: what does my glib reading of John 3:16 prevent me from seeing about God, Christ, faith, sin, and salvation? Do I lean too hard on the importance of individual belief, and forget the stunning truth that God loves and longs for all of creation — quite apart from my belief or unbelief? Do I treat Jesus's words as a litmus test, using it not to communicate God's all-encompassing compassion and mercy, but to threaten unbelievers with God's judgment? Do I allow my interpretation to flatten and distort the meaning of "belief," reducing its nuance and complexity to mere intellectual assent? What does it mean, after all, to say, "I believe in Jesus?" Why is "belief," of all things, so important to God?

Growing up, I was taught that being a Christian means affirming the right things. To accept Jesus into my heart, to be "born again," was to agree to a set of doctrines about who Jesus is and what he

accomplished through his death and resurrection. To enter into orthodox faith was to believe that certain theological statements about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the human condition, the Bible, and the Church, were true. When we spoke of “growing in the faith,” what we meant was that we were honing our doctrinal commitments. To be a mature Christian was to have one’s theological ducks in a row.

This honing, moreover, was a serious business. As a teenager, I watched congregations split up over the legitimacy of infant baptism over “believer’s” baptism. I knew Christians who considered speaking in tongues a litmus test for faith. I heard pastors fight over whether the Communion table should be open (available to all) or closed (reserved for baptized members of a particular faith community). I heard others argue over the most nitpicky details concerning the “endtimes.” Would God take his children to heaven before the “great tribulation?” Or would they have to hang around and endure the birth pains of a new kingdom?

For the earnest and well-meaning people involved, none of these questions were silly or peripheral; they cut to the heart of what it means to be Christian. Getting the theological particulars right was paramount — what else could faith entail, if not fidelity to the correct particulars?

I fear that I fall into the same trap when I speak glibly of John 3:16 as “Christianity in a nutshell.” “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.” It sounds so gorgeously precise, so deceptively simple. But does all of Christianity really come down to my accepting certain propositions about Jesus to be factual? To be true? Is that really it?

For me, this way of believing — this way of defining faith as an intellectual assent to precisely codified doctrines — has fallen apart. Not because I can’t assent, but because my assenting, in and of itself, hasn’t fostered anything close to the meaningful relationship I desire to have with God. If anything, my intellectual assent has functioned as a smokescreen. A distraction. A substitute.

In her 2013 book, *Christianity after Religion*, historian Diana Butler Bass points out that the English word “believe” comes from the German “belieben” — the German word for love. To believe is not to hold an opinion. To believe is to treasure. To hold something beloved. To give my heart over to it without reservation. To believe in something is to invest it with my love.

This is true in the ancient languages of the Bible as well. When the writers of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament wrote of faithfulness, they were not writing about an intellectual surrender to a factual truth. They were writing about fidelity, trust, and confidence. As they saw it, to believe in God was to place their full confidence in him. To throw their whole hearts, minds, and bodies into his hands.

The fact is, I can’t think of any significant human relationships in which doctrine matters more than love and trust. So why should my relationship with God be any different?

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? To hold onto him? To trust him with my life? For Nicodemus, it meant starting anew, letting go of all he thought he understood about the life of faith. It meant being “born again,” becoming a newborn, vulnerable, hungry, and ready to receive reality in a brand new way. It meant coming out of the darkness and risking the light. None of this could be reduced to an altar call or a litmus test. The work of trusting Jesus was mind-bending, soul-altering work — it was hard, and it took time, and it involved setbacks, fears, and disappointments. No wonder Nicodemus walked away baffled that first night. Jesus was calling him to so much more than a rote recitation of the sinner’s prayer; he was calling him to fall in love, and stay in love. Why is belief important to God? Because love is important to God. To believe is to be love.

“Christianity in a nutshell” sounds catchy, but in the end, I don’t think it exists. I also don't think easy answers or efficient soundbites will serve us well during this season of Lent. After all, we're in the desert now. The wilderness. Wandering, thirsting, yearning, waiting, and listening go with the territory.

Yes, John 3:16 is a beautiful passage of scripture, and we are right to recite it, memorize it, and cherish it. But the way of faith it points to is as vast and mysterious as all the workings of a human heart reaching out for God’s. That’s why we can trust it; its challenge corresponds to reality. No love as rich, demanding, costly, and free as God’s love for us can ever be reduced to a formula.

**Hymn: We Are Pilgrims**            **VU595**        **CCLI Lic. #1576520, CSPL201561**

- 1 We are pilgrims on a journey,  
fellow travellers on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.
  
- 2 Sister, let me be your servant,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.
  
- 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.
  
- 4 I will weep when you are weeping,  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.
  
- 5 When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.
  
- 6 Brother, let me be your servant,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

**Joys and Concerns**

- Happy Birthday
  - Linda Porritt celebrates on Monday, March 6th

## Preparation for Prayer

Let us practice the art of Praying with our Eyes Wide Open, that in seeing the world and those within it we are called to tend we may be *opening the eyes of our hearts to all in need around us* (Lamont Koerner '81 MDiv God Pause for Thursday, September 16, 2021 from Luther Seminary):

**Prayers of the People** Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word®** *Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1*. Copyright 2013, alt.

God our Helper,  
we thank you for keeping our lives  
always in your care and protection  
and pray for any and all who are in harm's way.  
For those walking in the midst of danger . . .  
for those who are treading a slippery path . . .  
for those exhausted and seeking relief . . .  
for those who face a mountain of worry or debt  
or any other obstacles. . . .  
Be Guardian and Guide, we pray,  
setting all our feet on your paths of righteousness and peace.

We pray for those who are struggling  
with a new challenge or call . . .  
with a major transition in life or livelihood . . .  
with their faith and understanding . . .  
with grief, ancient or new . . .  
Keep in your tender care and mercy, O God,  
those who are sick in mind, body, or spirit . . .  
those weighed down by depression or pain . . .  
those recuperating from surgery or accident. . . .  
Protect not only us and those we love,  
but also the whole wide world you so love.  
In places of war, bring peace . . .  
in places beset by natural disaster, bring calm and restoration . . .  
where there is unrest and injustice, make justice our aim.

Where hope has grown tired and thin, lift our sights,  
so that we may see hope beyond hope,  
life beyond death,  
and you, lifted up before us.  
In the name of Christ,  
who gave himself for our sake, we pray.  
Amen.

**Lord's Prayer**      Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
                         Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

## Minute for Mission: Empowering Women to Be Agents of Change



*Credit: ASWA*

Maina Bai's mother died when she was a baby, and Maina never went to school. When she was just 10 years old, her father married her off to an older man. By 16, she had a child. A few years after the birth of her daughter, her husband died. When she returned to her maternal home, Maina was married off—again.

After a few years of marriage, Maina became a widow again. Single, she faced extraordinary stigma.

Approximately 2.18 million single women like Maina live in the state of Rajasthan, India. Whether they are widowed, divorced, or have never been married, these women are deemed “incomplete” and a disgrace to their families. As a result, many live lives marked by stigma, fear, and violence—simply for not being married.

Your gifts support Mission & Service partner Astha Sansthan, “Association of Strong Women Alone” (ASWA). In 20 years, the association grew from 450 single women to over 70,000 members.

ASWA's approach is simple: Create a safe space for single women to come together and get the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their lives.

The association has made all the difference for Maina.

She can now read and write and is empowering other women to become literate. Because of her leadership, 35 women have enrolled in adult learning. All of them now have grade eight certificates. What's more, the generational cycle of illiteracy has been broken. Maina's daughter can not only read and write but is also teaching others to do the same, opening up opportunities and increasing independence.

Your **Mission & Service** gifts empower women like Maina to be agents of change within their communities. Thank you for your generosity.

**Offering Invitation** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1.** Copyright 2013.*

All that we have is a gift from God.  
In faith and gratitude,  
we return now a portion  
of what we have so abundantly received,  
as grateful heirs of the promises of God.

**Offering Hymn: When We Are Living** VU581 OneLicense #A-740237

Through all our living, we our fruits must give.  
Good works of service are for offering.  
When we are giving, or when receiving,  
we belong to God, we belong to God.

**Offering Prayer (in unison)** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1.** Copyright 2013.*

**Gracious God,  
we dedicate to you not only these gifts,  
but also ourselves, in deep gratitude—  
for your call on our lives,  
your guidance in the baptismal journey,  
and for blessing us  
that we may be a blessing to others.  
Accept what we bring  
for your own good purposes.  
In Christ we pray. Amen.**

**Hymn: I Feel the Winds of God** VU625 OneLicense #A-740237

- 1 I feel the winds of God today;  
today my sail I lift,  
though heavy oft with drenching spray  
and torn with many a rift;  
if hope but light the water's crest,  
and Christ my bark will use,  
I'll seek the seas at his behest,  
and brave another cruise.
- 2 It is the wind of God that dries  
my vain regretful tears,  
until with braver thoughts shall rise  
the purer, brighter years;  
if cast on shores of selfish ease  
or pleasure I should be,  
O let me feel your freshening breeze,  
and I'll put back to sea.
- 3 If ever I forget your love  
and how that love was shown,

lift high the blood-red flag above;  
it bears your name alone.  
Great pilot of my onward way,  
you will not let me drift.  
I feel the winds of God today;  
today my sail I lift.

**Commissioning** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1.*

Go out in faith,  
trusting in God's sense of direction.  
Remember how much God loves this world  
and so love the world in the name of Christ,  
that your testimony becomes the good news  
someone else has been waiting to receive.

### **Change the Light**

Watch. I am going to change the light and I invite you to change your light.  
I'm not going to put it out, just change it.  
See how it is only in one place?  
*\*Change Light and I invite you to change your light at home\**  
Can you see it? Now it is moving everywhere, to everyone, with everyone.  
Now everywhere you go today, the light will go with you.

**Blessing** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1. Copyright 2013.*

As you go out and come in,  
may God keep you by sunlight and moonlight;  
may Christ encompass you with love;  
and may the Holy Spirit empower you with new life;  
now and forever.

**Household Prayer: Morning** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1. Copyright 2013.*

Loving God,  
you have given me the gift of this new day,  
and you send me out to live it fully and well.  
Help me to be attentive to your direction and leading.  
If you should call me to go in some direction,  
give me courage to try this new thing.  
If you present me with a mysterious truth or grace,  
help me to understand, or to seek understanding,  
with a sense of wonder and faith.  
Whatever this day may hold,  
I trust that you will keep me  
in all my comings and goings.  
In your Son's name, I pray. Amen.

**Household Prayer: Evening** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word®**  
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Gracious God,  
as the evening comes and the light fades,  
I look for you even in the shadows.  
Your love and protection stay with me through the night hours,  
and I rest in your promises.  
For the day as it has been,  
I give you thanks.  
For the gift of rest,  
I offer a hymn of praise.  
You love me and the whole world so greatly  
that you offer us salvation.  
After a night of rest,  
bring me into the light of a new day.  
In gratitude, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.