

10 March 2024 – Lent 4 / Time Change! (Spring Forward 1 hour)

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

We come to worship in Jesus' name acknowledging with gratitude the land where we are gathered. This is traditional and unceded Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ. We continue to pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships.

□ *Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary (repeat)*

Lent Liturgy¹

On this fourth Sunday of Lent, we overhear a nighttime conversation between Jesus and a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

Jesus says we must be born anew and born of the Spirit. With Nicodemus we ask, “How can these things be?”

But maybe it's not all about understanding these mysteries. Maybe it's about hearing, believing and sharing the good news with our words and our actions.

“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.”

PWS&D Story **Transforming Lives Through Education**

“Speaking on behalf of most mothers at the school, we are grateful,” Marta, a mother of four, expresses deep gratitude. Marta's two children attend Francisco Coll School, which is supported by PWS&D and located near a landfill in Guatemala City. Additionally, her eldest son, 14-year-old Anderson, benefits from a scholarship, facilitating his continued education after graduation.

Marta's relentless efforts to make ends meet involve hard work—preparing and selling food. She recognizes the invaluable opportunity Francisco Coll provides for her children.

“Francisco Coll is a blessing. It is an opportunity. It is a great support for us—people of low income—because otherwise we wouldn't be able to send our kids to school,” she shares.

Francisco Coll not only enables marginalized children, but also extends its impact to parents. As Marta notes, *“Parenting classes are very good because as a parent, as a mother, there are things we don't know, and we learn so much.”*

This Lenten season, thank you for responding to help students discover their potential, break cycles of poverty and build brighter futures.

¹ Written by the Rev. John Bannerman (PWS&D Committee Co-Convener)

Gathering Prayer / the Lord's Prayer / Words of Hope

Gracious God, great and wonderful are your works! Your steadfast love is everlasting. Where there is darkness, you bring light. Where there is sadness, you speak words of hope. Where there is despair, you bring new possibilities. You have come among us in Christ Jesus to save and sustain us. In this time of worship, stir us with your Spirit, O God. Awaken our joy and reverence in our songs and in our silence, in our prayers and in our praises.

Awaken too our humility and repentance as we bring our frailty before you in confession... We admit that we often take your acceptance of us for granted. We are sometimes careless in our relationships, focused on our own needs and desires. The news distracts us, and we put opinion above your expectations of us. Forgive us. Renew hope and our commitment to your way in the world. We pray together in Jesus' name... ***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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

Friends, by grace we have been saved through faith. This is not our doing but God's gift to us. Know that God forgives you and encourages you to forgive one another. Share the peace of Christ with one another. ***The peace of Christ be with you. And also with you.***

□ ***We come to ask your forgiveness***

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Prayer for Understanding

God of light and truth, speak to us through the Scriptures this day. By the Spirit working in us and among us, lead us to encounter your Living Word. Amen

Scripture Numbers 21:4-9 [OT 139]

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food."

Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us."

So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live."

So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22 [responsive / displayed]

O give thanks to the LORD, for the Lord is good;
God's steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
**those redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.**

Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

**Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD, who saved them from their distress;
the Lord sent out a word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.**

Let them give thanks for the LORD's steadfast love, for God's wonderful works to humankind.

And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of God's deeds with songs of joy.

Ephesians 2:1-10 [NT 192]

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

John 3:14-21 [NT 94]

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.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

□ *Lift high the cross* 643

Offering and Prayer

The season of Lent leads us closer and closer to the Cross. As we contemplate Jesus lifted up for our sakes, consider what the gift of his mercy and grace means for you. Let your offering express your thanksgiving for such an amazing gift from God.

□ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

Lord Jesus, you gave so much without counting the cost. Bless these gifts with your generous love. Use them to bless the world with the same hope and healing we have found in you. Amen

□ *O love, how deep, how broad, how high* 205

† Pastoral Prayers (response: *God in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.***)

Gracious God, you have called together a people to be the church of Jesus Christ. Keep our minds and hearts open to your Word and your ways, so that the world may see in us compassion and wisdom in action. May our lives lead others to believe you are love and live by your truth. *God in your mercy... **Hear our prayer.***

Creator God, you made all things and called them good. Thank you for the wonders of the world that surround us and the promise of new life stirring in burrows and seed beds around us. We pray for the earth in its vulnerability, staggering under the demands of human needs and expectations. May your planet earth be held in reverence by all peoples. Guide us in our country and our community to use its

resources wisely and respect its fragile balance between life and death. *God in your mercy... Hear our prayer.*

Prince of peace, thank you for your commitment to mercy and forgiveness which overcome our desires for revenge. Speak to the hearts of people everywhere and to those who occupy places of power and influence in every land. Teach us how to seek peace on earth together. Especially this week we remember some of the many regions in conflict around the world... **Gaza, Ukraine, Haiti, Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Nigeria...** and pray that a just resolution to conflict will soon prevail for the sake of the vulnerable. Overcome the fear, greed, violence or vanity that turn neighbour against neighbour and nation against nation. May all who claim your name be known as makers of the peace. *God in your mercy... Hear our prayer.*

Christ, healer of hearts and hopes, you desire health and wholeness for each one of us, thank you for times of wellbeing, whether measured in minutes or months. We pray that lives caught up in the economic pressures of these times may find enough to sustain them day by day and hope for more generous future. Grant rest and renewal to all who are broken in body or spirit and bring comfort to those who ache with loss or anxiety. In silence we lift before you the names of those on our hearts today...

God in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit, source of wisdom and courage, embrace us with hope that we may live faithfully, encouraging each other by the commitment we have witnessed in Jesus Christ. **Amen**

□ *Oh give thanks, for God is gracious* **72**

Blessing

As we continue our Lenten journey, remember the words from Ephesians: "Live as children of light. The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true."

May the light of God's love surround you – the light of Christ's mercy renew you – and the light of the Spirit's wisdom guide you, through this and every day.

□ *Bless the Lord* **PCUSA 544**