



Abundant Life Lutheran Church
Where ALL are welcome!

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Second Sunday of Lent
Sunday, February 28, 2021

Abundant Life Lutheran Church
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PRAYER OF THE DAY

Merciful God,

You long for your people to bear the fruits of mercy and repentance. Tend and guide our growth so that we might become a faithful people who serve you and the world you love, for the sake of Jesus.

Amen.

READINGS

Psalm: Psalm 122

Gospel: Luke 13:1-9, 31-35

SERMON

Grace to you and peace in the One who frees us from sin and death, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

What comes to mind when you hear the word, “repent?” Do you get warm, fuzzy feelings? Probably not, right? For many of us, the word “repentance” might bring up uncomfortable feelings – feelings of sadness or regret, maybe even feelings of fear, or shame, or guilt.

So why does Jesus talk so much about repentance?

Is it because Jesus wants us to feel bad about ourselves? Does he want us to spend our whole lives apologizing for everything? Do you think that Jesus wants us to

live our lives bearing the weight of all our mistakes and sins on our shoulders like a huge sack of flour?

Is this what repentance is all about?

I don't think so. I mean, to be sure, repentance can be really uncomfortable. Repenting means acknowledging our sin. Acknowledging that we have made mistakes, that we have hurt people, that our actions have consequences, well, that can be uncomfortable. It can be painful. But what if God could work through that pain and discomfort to transform our hearts?

In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge is a greedy and miserly moneylender living in London in the 1800's. Of course there are many adaptations of this story, but my favourite is *A Muppets Christmas Carol*, where Kermit the Frog plays Bob Cratchit, and Gonzo plays Charles Dickens himself.

In one of the opening scenes, Kermit, or Bob Cratchit, timidly approaches Mr. Scrooge, his boss, at his desk. Bob Cratchit clears his throat, and says, "If you please, Mr. Scrooge, it's gotten colder, and the bookkeeping staff would like an extra shovelful full of coal for the fire." Scrooge looks up from his desk, and coldheartedly replies, "How would the bookkeepers like to be *suddenly unemployed?*"

When he comes home to an empty, dark house on Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his late business partner, Jacob Marley – or in the Muppet version, Jacob and Robert Marley, played by the two grouchy old men, Statler and Waldorf. Marley's ghost is weighed down by iron chains, and he is dragging around cashboxes, padlocks, and heavy purses. Marley warns Scrooge, "I wear the chain that I forged in life. I made it link by link and yard by yard. Tonight you will be visited by three spirits. If you do not listen to them, your chain will be even heavier than mine."

So that night Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by three spirits – the Spirit of Christmas Past, the Spirit of Christmas Present, and the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come. These Spirits reveal to Scrooge how his greed and love of money have turned his heart to stone, how they have driven a wedge between him and the people he once loved. The Spirit of Christmas Present brings him to the window of the Cratchits' house, where Bob Cratchit and his family are sharing a meagre Christmas meal. It's not much, but they are grateful for it. He sees how their son, Tiny Tim, is ill, and the Spirit tells Scrooge that Tiny Tim doesn't have long to live. Finally, the

Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come brings Scrooge to a lonely, neglected gravestone, and Scrooge realizes that it is his own.

It's a dark night of the soul for Scrooge, but it changes him. He repents, and his heart is changed. He finds himself in his own bed on Christmas morning, but it is a new beginning. He is moved to give generously to a charity that he rejected only the day before, and he decides to surprise Bob Cratchit and his family not only with a plump Christmas turkey, but with a generous raise as well.

Repentance saves Scrooge. It frees him from the chains that had bound him to his own greed and lust for money. It frees him to live a life that is life-giving for others.

In our gospel today, Jesus tells the parable of the fig tree. The fig tree isn't producing fruit, and the landowner is determined to cut it down. But the gardener says, "Wait. Just wait one more year. Give me a little more time to take care of it. To prune it, and water it, and fertilize it with manure. Maybe then it will produce figs."

The life of repentance that Jesus is inviting us into is like a tree that is full of all sorts of delicious fruit! The life of repentance is a life that is life-giving for others. Just like the gardener caring for the fig tree, God wants to shower us with mercy, to prune us and water us, and fertilize us with manure, so that we would produce sweet and fragrant fruit just like that fig tree! Just like Ebenezer Scrooge, God wants to free us from the chains that bind us to our sin, so that we would be free to live lives that are life-giving for others.

Now you might think that this idea of repentance might seem out-dated, or old-fashioned. But it's not. In fact, the ones who are taking up this call to repentance today might be the people you'd least expect. It's our young people. And they're calling for repentance on Facebook, and Instagram, and Twitter, and even out in the streets.

What does that call to repentance sound like today?

It sounds like young women like Greta Thunberg and Autumn Pelletier, marching in the streets with millions of students and calling us to turn away from our patterns of exploiting the earth and polluting our planet, calling us to turn towards a more sustainable future for all people.

It sounds like young women saying, “#MeToo.” Calling us to turn from our patterns of permitting the harassment, abuse, and exploitation of women, calling us to turn towards a future where all people are treated with respect and dignity.

It sounds like sports teams taking a knee during the national anthem. It sounds like people marching in the streets chanting, “Black Lives Matter,” calling us to turn away from our patterns that allow people of colour to be victims of intimidation and police violence, calling us to turn towards a future where all people are honoured as human beings who bear the image of God.

It sounds like Truth and Reconciliation. It smells like the burning of sage, and it sounds like the beating of the drum, calling us to turn from the dehumanizing legacy of colonization, to a future where settlers and Indigenous people can live in harmony and right relationship with one another.

This is what repentance looks like, sounds like, smells like today. God’s Spirit moving in our world, moving us to turn from patterns that dehumanize and destroy, moving us to turn toward a life that is life-giving for all people.

Just like Ebenezer Scrooge was freed from the chains that kept him bound to his purses and cashboxes, God’s invitation to a life of repentance is an invitation to be freed from our bondage to sin and death. That by trusting in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we would be freed from the patterns of our lives that diminish humanity and destroy God’s creation. So that just like that fig tree, we might be free to live a life that is life-giving for others.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Faithful God, we give you thanks for our congregations, and this ministry that we share. Thank you for the shared ministry partnership between Prince of Peace and Abundant Life, and the way we have supported and encouraged one another in this challenging time. Be with us as we meet for our AGM’s this month. Help us to discern where your Spirit is leading us. Help us to be patient as we use new technology to conduct these meetings. Teach us to listen to one another with

compassion and kindness, and renew our vision and our energy for ministry. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our companion, walk with us on our Lenten journey. As we walk with Jesus to Jerusalem, help us to hear familiar stories with new ears. Teach us to become more aware of your presence with us in our fasting, our prayer, and our daily living. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of peace, bring an end to violence and oppression in our world. We especially pray for victims of violent oppression in Somalia, Myanmar, Russia, and Hong Kong. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of healing, be with each and every country that is struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Be with all who are working to provide vaccinations, not just for rich nations, but for people everywhere. Comfort those who are facing loneliness and isolation. Heal those who are sick, be with those who are separated from loved ones, comfort those who grieve, and embrace the dying in your loving arms. Give all of us the compassion and courage to care for one another, and to work together to get through this difficult time. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of love, we pray for all in our faith family who are in need of your healing hand and protection, especially *Brett, Kurt, Irene, Steffie, Bill, Lorraine, Chris, Karen & Rolf, Becky, Jon, Michelle, Lynne, Ben, Amanda, Zarah, Pastor Donna Smalley, Jon, Eleanor, Glenda, Jason, Travis, Freya and Melanie*, those we name in our hearts or out loud before you. (*A brief silence*) Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In baptism you join us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise you for all those who have died trusting in your faithfulness. Bring us with them to the fullness of your reign. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

COVID UPDATE ON WORSHIP SERVICES

There will continue to be **no** in-person services until further notice.

Abundant Life will live-stream the service this Sunday, **February 28** at 11:00 am.

Prince of Peace will live-stream the service on Sunday, **March 7** at 11:00 am

Thank you for being patient with and standing by us and the changes made as we navigate this ever-changing pandemic.

COMMUNION ON ZOOM

We will be continuing to celebrate the Lord's Supper on Zoom at least once or twice every month. Please bring some bread and wine (or grape juice and gluten-free bread or cracker), and join us on **March 14** and **28** (Palm Sunday) at **1:30 pm**. Please use the following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88117325641?pwd=WXdnODIYRWpmS2NJeVNLY3lKbmVrUT09>

Meeting ID: 881 1732 5641 / Passcode: 394102

Join by telephone: 1-204-272-7920 (Note: it may be a long distance number)

YOUTH ANNOUNCEMENT: GRADES 3-6

Next event Sunday March 21st Zoom meeting 1:00 pm. Watch for details

LUTHER VILLAGE JOB POSTINGS

If you would like to spend the summer in the outdoors, by the lake and an amazing community, this may be the perfect job opportunity for you! Luther Village is a non-profit Christian Camp located in Echo Bay on Dogtooth Lake in Northwestern Ontario. Luther Village is a ministry of Manitoba Northwestern Ontario (MNO) Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Job posting opportunities include Program Coordinator, Kitchen Lead, Program Leads, Kitchen/Housekeeping, Maintenance & Office Assistants. For more information, please visit their website:

[Staff — Luther Village Camp | Dogtooth Lake](#)

LENT MID-WEEK WORSHIP

Sherwood Park Lutheran Church is providing mid-week Lenten worship services starting at 6:30 pm every Wednesday evening throughout the season of Lent. If you would like to participate in mid-week Lenten worship, feel free to do so by visiting their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SherParkWpg>.

LENT DAILY DEVOTIONS FROM LUTHERANS CONNECT

If you are interested in Lenten devotions, here is a great resource from Lutherans Connect:

"Ash Wednesday is when we mark the beginning of our journey with Jesus in the wilderness. Lutherans Connect invites you to make space for that journey, by joining us for reflection every day, from Monday to Saturday, during Lent and Holy Week. As usual, we will bring together scripture readings, poetry, music, reflection and images from a wide range of ecumenical traditions in a daily online devotion." <https://retellingthestories.blogspot.com/2021/02/lc-retelling-stories-is-devotional.html>

OFFERING

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a financially stressful time for many people. At the same time, in order to continue the ministry of our church, we are relying on our members to continue to give regularly. Please consider how you are able to continue to support our church during this time. There are many ways to give to our church, even if we aren't meeting in person:

- Consider signing up for PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)
 - to sign up for PAR, please email office@abundantlifelutheran.ca for more information
- Donating online through the "Online offering" button on our website
- Sending weekly or monthly cheques in the mail to:
Abundant Life Lutheran Church
3486 Raleigh Street
East St. Paul, MB R2E 1B9

We are thankful for your continued support!

ALL Contact Information:

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Lisa van Dijk, Director of Youth Ministries - splc-youth@live.ca

Charla Turner, Administrative Secretary - office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Lori Templeton, Financial Secretary - office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Rick Scherger, Communications Coordinator -

rickscherger@fatecommunications.ca

❖ *See below listing for quick access to all our social media sites:*

- ALL Facebook: www.facebook.com/abundantlifelutheran/
- ALL Website: www.abundantlifelutheran.ca/
- ALL Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/abundantlifelutheran/>
- ALL Youtube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdo5H74gx3c0sFXghrdXdxQ

- *Grades 3-6 Youth Facebook & Instagram:*
www.facebook.com/slavg.youth.jr & www.instagram.com/slavg.youth.jr/
- *Grades 7-12 SLAW Youth Instagram:* www.instagram.com/slav.youth/

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Jeremy's Hours

Tuesday 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM & Wednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Administrative Secretary Hours

Tuesdays 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM

REACHING OUT

Are you in distress? Here are a few numbers that you may find helpful.

911 Emergency - Dial 911

Winnipeg Police Service Non-Emergency Line

1-204-986-6222

Health Links (Info Sante)

204-788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257.

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba

24-7 support line for anyone experiencing anxiety: 204-925-0600

Klinic Crisis Line

204-786-8686 or 1-888-322-3019 / TTY 204-784-4097

Manitoba Suicide Line "Reason to Live"

1-877-435-7170 (1-877-HELP170)

Kids Help Phone (national line available to Manitoba Youth)

1-800-668-6868

Klinic Sexual Assault Crisis Line

204-786-8631 or 1-888-292-7565 / TTY 204-784-4097