• MELROSE UNITED CHURCH •

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Minister:

Music Director: Family Ministries Coordinator: Custodian: Office Administrator: Rev. Sonia Ireson

Alexander Cann Meg Chalmers Kevin Geluch Michelle Millson

♦ Friday April 10, 2020 ♦ Good Friday Service

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

* indicates a time to stand, if you are able congregational responses are in **boldface type**

♦ GATHERING ♦

PRELUDE - "Prelude" from *Cello Suite No. 2 in D minor* J.S. Bach Cello: Kirk Starkey

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

One: Today the carpenter's hands are nailed to a cross, The king of kings is crowned with thorns And wears the purple robe of mockery. Today, he sets us free, himself imprisoned on a tree. Today is God's Friday.

CALL TO WORSHIP

- One: We have gathered here today from the safety of our homes To remember and give thanks for Jesus Christ,
 - All: the one who knew human joy and sorrow,
- One: Yet also the one in whom we discover God.
 - All: We give thanks for his life How he healed, forgave, and brought hope.
- One: But we also stop to remember his death, To remember –
- All: How those in power, feeling threatened by him, conspired to kill him;
- One: We remember how he was betrayed, denied and abandoned by his friends.
 - All: Yet in his death, he bore the sin, grief, and suffering of the world.

- One: In his aloneness on that cross, we see the mistreatment of others, those ignored, mistreated, oppressed, and we silently stand by. Our sins weigh heavily on our heads. We give thanks for Jesus Christ.
- All: He lived for us, and he died for us. That is why we worship today. Thanks be to God.

OPENING PRAYER (said together) Holy Thief on that middle cross, Surrounded by lesser thieves, Keep us wakeful! Keep us watchful! So that, when you come To steal away all that we cherish too much, To take from us all that keeps us from you, We have the grace To simply give it instead, Along with our hearts, to you. Amen.

★ HYMN – Lift High the Cross

VU 151

[Refrain:] Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim till all the world adore his sacred name.

1 Come, Christians, follow where our Saviour trod, the Lamb victorious, Christ the Son of God. [Refrain]

2 Led on their way by this triumphant sign, the hosts of God in conquering ranks combine. [Refrain]

3 Each newborn servant of the Crucified bears on the brow the seal of him who died. [Refrain]

4 Saviour, once lifted on the glorious tree, your death has brought us life eternally. [Refrain]

5 So shall our song of triumph ever be praise to the Crucified for victory. [Refrain]

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: We have come together as one family in Christ. On this day when Jesus expands our understanding of family – drawing the connections between his mother and his beloved disciple – we come before God in confession. In recognition of our brokenness, of the ways we have wounded the relationship we have with God and with each other, we come not so much in shame but with trust.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy and Immortal One **All: Have mercy on us.**

One: Let us confess our brokenness. illumin

All: Holy God, you call us to walk the way of the cross, but we choose the way that is easy or the one that promises us the best return.

You call us to seek out the lost, the lonely, the rejected, But we prefer those who are secure, good company, "together."

You call us to stop at the foot of the cross on our journey, But we would rather bypass death on the way to new life.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

One: Jesus invites us into our true home – God's embrace – where our relationships are tended into wholeness by the healing touch of God's forgiveness. In that abundant, unconditional forgiveness, as we commend our spirits into fullness with the Holy Spirit, we rejoice in the promise of what we continue to become. Thanks be to God! Amen.

♦ SERVICE OF THE WORD ♦

Readers: David & Carolyn Duff, Margaret Duff & Jim Kraemer

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: May we come before you, O God, with open lives to receive your words that we may give them new life as we listen to what you have to say. Open our hearts so that we may feel your love surrounding us as you teach us to journey in your way. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him — so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals — so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

One: The Word of God. **All: Thanks be to God.**

THE FIRST READING OF THE GOSPEL: John 18:1-18 (Betrayal, Arrest, High Priest's House and Peter's First Denial) After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.

First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people. Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

* HYMN - Ah Holy Jesus

VU 138

1 Ah, holy Jesus, how have you offended, that we to judge you have in hate pretended? By foes derided, by your own rejected, O most afflicted.

2 Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon you? Alas, my treason, Jesus, has undone you; yes, I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied you; I crucified you.

3 Lo, the good shepherd for the sheep is offered; the slave is guilty, yet the Son has suffered; for our atonement, we nothing heeded, God interceded.

4 For me, kind Jesus, was your incarnation, your mortal sorrow, and your life's oblation, your death of anguish and your bitter passion, for my salvation.

5 Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay you, I do adore you, and will ever pray you, think on your pity and your love unswerving, not my deserving.

THE SECOND READING OF THE GOSPEL: John 18:19-40 (High Priest questions Jesus, Peter's second and third denials, Trial before Pilate)

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.) Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

* HYMN – O Sacred Head

VU 145

1 O sacred head, sore wounded, with grief and shame weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown: how art thou pale with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn; how does that visage languish which once was bright as morn!

2 Thy grief and bitter passion were all for sinners' gain; mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the cruel pain. Lo, here I fall, my Saviour, turn not from me thy face; but look on me with favour, and grant to me thy grace. 3 What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend, for this thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end? O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be, Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to thee.

4 Be near me when I am dying, O show thy cross to me; and for my succour flying, come, Lord, to set me free. These eyes, new faith receiving, from thee shall not remove, for all who die believing, die safely through thy love.

THE THIRD READING OF THE GOSPEL: John 19:1-42 (Sentenced to Death, Crucifixion, Death and Burial)

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God." Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor." When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor."

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them.

Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

One: This is the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ All: Praise to you, O Christ

REFLECTION: Reading on the Centurion (based on Matthew 8:5-13; 27-54) (Taken from Voices for Good Friday by Amanda J. Burr)

My name is Servius. I have been a soldier in Caesar's legions for more than twenty years. When I was first recruited out of the provinces, I pledged twenty-five years of my life and loyalty to the Sixth Ironclad Legion known as "Ferrata." We served first under the great Mark Antony. Like all new recruits, I began as a private, trying not to trip over my armor. Whenever an opportunity arose, I enlisted hoping for advancement, more pay, and the benefits granted by Roman citizenship. I joined the cavalry and became a horse soldier, and later one of the training officers with the rank of under-centurion. With each rise in rank, my pay and my wealth doubled, even tripled. I gained responsibility and staff. My deputies were hardworking and loyal, but none equaled Miles. He was assigned to me in my tenth year of service. Taking charge of my schedule, Miles organized my life, sorting out my myriad commitments so that I was able to invest appropriate time and energy in building up the cavalry, not supervising horsemen. Through his diligence, I was able to create order out of chaos, and in my eighteenth year of service was promoted to the rank of district centurion, responsible for administration and law enforcement in my appointed district.

The powers-that-be sent me to the small garrison on the northern coast of the Sea of Tiberias in the town of Capernaum. Three of my deputies came with me – Miles among them. I know I was sent there to keep an eye on the Jewish population, but life was peaceful and pleasant in the fishing community. Though the fishermen exported much of their fish, those of us fortunate enough to live there regularly dined on the day's catch.

Administering the law in the region was often about settling disputes between rival business owners and keeping our eye on the slippery fingers of the local tax collectors. The cavalry made regular rounds keeping a vigilant presence in the area, and we were often resented by the people.

People had their problems, don't get me wrong, but the Jewish community was bound together by their common identity and heritage. They were well aware that they lived under the thumb of the Roman Emperor, a Gentile. They waited with certainty for their day of triumph and redemption when God's messiah would present himself. I didn't spend much time wondering about the arrival of their messiah, having pledged my undying loyalty to Caesar, Rome's own messiah and son of god.

When the man named Jesus came from Judea and began to teach about the kingdom of his God, everything changed. For one thing, the fish my soldiers and I looked forward to eating every day were no longer in plentiful supply. Crowd of people lined the shore of the lake listening to him speak from a fishing boat, but no one was out catching fish.

He spoke to crowds everywhere, teaching in their synagogues and on hillsides, but he didn't incite his listeners; he blessed them. They listened to him for hours as he encouraged them and warned them against judging one another. People also claimed he was a healer, touching away leprosy and praying away blindness.

I busied myself with my administrative tasks until I was called away to Jerusalem to meet the new governor of Judea. I had no qualms about leaving Miles in charge of the garrison, but not long after I left he had a terrible accident. His horse was startled by a snake in the road and shied away so violently that Miles was thrown off. He landed on an outcropping of jagged rocks and when he managed to recover his breath, he found he couldn't move. The soldiers carried him back to the garrison where physicians attended to his needs as best they could, but all said there was nothing they could do. His back had been broken. When I received word of what had happened, I hurried back to Capernaum. Miles had been my right arm, my closest friend for nearly a decade. I loved him as if he were my own son. I brought him to my home where I could supervise his care personally, but in spite of my best efforts, he was wasting away. Miles' diligent and inexhaustible spirit was ebbing away. Soon he would give up on life, and that was a loss I could not bear.

Desperate, I mounted my horse and began to ride. I had no idea where I was going or what I was riding toward or away from. Suddenly, as of appearing out of nowhere, Jesus, the holy man, was walking toward me. I reined in my horse. Could the Jewish healer help me? Would he help me, a Gentile? I didn't know how to approach him. How would he react confronted by a Roman centurion astride his horse? I dismounted and removed my helmet. Dropping my helmet and the reins to the ground, I left my horse and walked slowly toward Jesus.

He showed no alarm or distress. It was almost as if he had been waiting for me. When I came close, I lowered my gaze and told him about Miles. "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in terrible distress." Jesus immediately offered to come to my home to help. I was stunned. This just wasn't done. Legally, Gentiles were considered unclean in Jewish circles. I was uncharacteristically tongue-tied and unable to sort out my words. Through a flood of tears I said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you under my roof, but only speak the word and my servant will be healed." I babbled on and on. I think I gave him my credentials.

At last he said, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith." As I turned to leave, I saw the gentle expression in his eyes as a smile came across his face. When I got back to the house, Miles was standing by his bed at attention and all I could do was fall on my knees, sobbing with relief. I saw Jesus many times after that. I became a kind of referral service, sending all sorts of different people to see him and listen to his teachings.

When I was transferred three years later to take charge of Pontius Pilate's Praetorian Guard, I hated to leave Capernaum. I left the people in good hands. Mile was their new district centurion.

In Jerusalem, I found the crucifixions were not rare. It was the accepted method of capital punishment for insurrectionists, zealots, and anyone who threatened the integrity of Caesar's empire. But when Jesus was brought before Pilate to stand trial, I waned to hide my face in shame.

Our eyes met, and it was as if I could read every one of his thoughts: relief – perhaps at recognizing a friend – fear, and determination. For the first time I was ashamed to be a Roman soldier, but if I walked away – if I hid myself away –there would be no one with him. I know it sounds ironic, maybe even cruel, but I stayed with him. I walked alongside him every step of that long and arduous way. I was there when he faltered and fell. I heard his every cry and every word he spoke, as we drove the nails into his hands. On his face, even through the pain, was that ever-forgiving and tender expression. At the sound of his final cry, I felt the earth shaking beneath my feet and I heard myself say:

"Truly this man is God's Son!"

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (concluded by the Prayer of Jesus) One: Let us pray...

For people worldwide who have been affected by the devastating pandemic: those who have succumbed to the illness, and their families in many cases unable to be with them as they died, or to hold funerals to mark their passing; those who are in in the throes of the illness, uncertain of necessary supplies to sufficiently care for them; those who put their own lives at risk every day to provide essential services; and those who are staggered with tiredness, overwork, and discouragement as they aid or futilely watch their patients die.

We pray for all those who suffer financially from being displaced from their work, and for those who worry about food and rent.

We pray for our leaders who must analyze, and make the most optimum decisions for the good of society.

We pray for the holy church of God throughout the world, that God may guide it and gather together so that we may weather this storm, and continue to worship our God in peace and tranquility.

God of power and love, your Spirit guides us and makes us holy. Strengthen all who seek to do your will and help us faithfully to do the work for which you have called us.

All: God of power and love, you have shown your compassion in Jesus Christ. Guide the work of our church here at Melrose. Help us to preserve in faith and to proclaim your name to the people. We pray for all who serve our church with the gifts that God gives them.

One: We pray together as Jesus taught...

All: 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 them that trespass against us And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil, For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory For ever and ever. Amen.

* HYMN – My Lord, What a Morning

VU 708

[Refrain:] My Lord, what a morning. my Lord, what a morning. My Lord, what a morning when the stars begin to fall.

1 You'll hear the trumpet sound, to wake the nations underground, looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall. [Refrain]

2 You'll hear the sinner cry, to wake the nations underground, looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall. [Refrain] 3 You'll hear the Christian shout, to wake the nations underground, looking to my God's right hand, when the stars begin to fall. [Refrain]

COMMISSIONING

One: Go out into the shadows of this day and night... Keep your vigil... Important things have happened... Even more important things are about to happen... Will we be tempted to abandon everything? Will we think it was not worthwhile? Can we believe that something good Can come out of something that feels so bad? The mystery continues.

BENEDICTION

One: May the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for us Keep our hearts in God's presence until our bodies Seek a homecoming as we are enfolded completely In the eternal gentle arms of the Divine. Amen.

POSTLUDE: "Allemande" from *Cello Suite No. 2 in D minor* J.S. Bach

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

We acknowledge that the land on which we worship has for thousands of years been the home of the Haudonowshalnee and the Anishnabeg Indigenous peoples who are covered under the Upper Canada Treaty. Our United Church is proud to be part of the Truth and Reconciliation Report honouring all indigenous people in Canada.