

**Bolded text is said in unison**

Text highlighted in yellow will be on the screen for everyone to see

Carlyle parts are highlighted like this

Radville parts are highlighted like this

McClure parts are highlighted like this

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# Second Sunday in Lent

Full to the Brim: Under God's Wing

## Announcements

## Acknowledgment Video

### Welcome (Carlyle)

*(although we are offering this script, please feel free to use your own words if that is more comfortable for you)*

Welcome friends and Rural Connect Partners, to the worship of God. This morning the communities of Carlyle, Radville and McClure come together as the people of God.

We worshipped together last week and after hours of getting all the tech figured out and days of worry and many crossed fingers, it all worked. Debra and Laura at McClure did a little happy dance at the end of worship, in the lobby of the church, and they report that it is good that there are no cameras in the lobby. Together we celebrate the perseverance, skill and patience that was called out of all our church families to get this going. Now that the stresses of getting things together are beginning to fade, the excitement of our partnership is beginning to take hold and we are excited to discover together new ways of being church.

We hope the tech continues to go well today and we trust that if things glitch we will do what we need to continue to worship through the liturgy prepared for the partnership by the hub, McClure. We welcome feedback and suggestions along the way.

Friends it is time now to open our hearts, relax our shoulders and worship.

### Lighting of the Christ Candle (McClure - Debra)

*(all 3 churches should have someone standing behind their communion table – or wherever the Christ Candle is placed. We will all light our candles simultaneously but McClure will say the words)*

As we journey through Lent,  
as we move towards the darkness of the cross,  
we light a candle to remind us of the light that can not be put out.

*(McClure wait until everyone has lit there candle before moving into the Call to Worship)*

## **Call to Worship** (McClure - Debra)

If God is a hen,  
    **we are under God's wing.**  
If God is a table,  
    **we each have a seat.**  
If God is a house,  
    **we are safe from the storm.**  
If God is a party,  
    **we're invited to dance.**  
If God is a melody,  
    **our names are the lyrics.**  
If this is God's house,  
    **then all are welcomed. All are loved. All belong.**  
Let us worship Holy God.

## **Gathering Song:** Simply to Be (Klusmeier)

**Simply to hold the given moment,  
simply to lay concern aside,  
simply to let the heart be speaking,  
is to be blessed:  
so am I blessed.**

## **Prayer of Confession and Words of Forgiveness** (Radville)

Family of faith, we come to confession not to wallow in our own guilt  
Instead, we come to confession because we know that change starts with being honest.  
So in a desire to grow and change, let us pray to a God who loves us like a mother hen.  
Let us confess our sins together as we pray this responsive prayer of confession. . .

**When the Pharisees tried to stop Jesus, Jesus said, "I will keep on."**

**I will keep on healing.  
I will keep on teaching.  
I will keep on preaching.  
I will keep on flipping the tables of injustice.  
I will keep on treating every person like a child of God.  
I will keep on believing that this world can change.  
I will keep on and keep on  
and keep on until God's promised day.  
Forgive us, God, for the times when we stop. Amen.**

Family of faith, because Jesus' love just keeps going,  
we can trust that that love and grace exists for us.  
So rest in this good news:

No matter what we do wrong or what we leave undone, we are under God's wing. We are loved, held, and forgiven. Thanks be to God for a love like that! Amen.

**Hymn:** "How Firm a Foundation" (VU 660, vs 1,2,3,5)

How firm a foundation, you servants of God,  
Is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!  
What more can be said than to you has been said,  
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

'Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed!  
For I am your God and will still give you aid;  
I'll strengthen and help you, and cause you to stand,  
Upheld by my righteous omnipotent hand.'

'When through the deep waters I call you to go,  
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;  
For I will be with you, your troubles to bless,  
And sanctify to you your deepest distress.'

'The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose  
I will not – I will not desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,  
I'll never – no, never – no, never forsake!

**Prayer of Illumination and Scripture:** (Carlyle)

Holy God, this life of ours is full to the brim.

Our days are overflowing with emails and to-do lists, schedules and notifications, assignments and deadlines. We wake up feeling behind, we go to sleep worrying about tomorrow, and we know—there has to be more than this. So we pray:

bend down and show us the way. Leave breadcrumbs in the street. Point us toward awe and wonder. Guide us to intimacy and trust.

Gift us with laughter that will make us cry and hope that will make us feel alive.

We want a new kind of full to the brim. Show us the way.

We are listening for your cues. Gratefully we pray, amen.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke: (Carlyle)

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See,

your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." '

## Reflection (McClure - Laura)

On Friday morning, just before writing this reflection, I had an a=ha moment... some new wisdom made its way into my being.

It came from my voice teacher, Aliah during my weekly singing lesson.

I was having a hard time... the words I was trying to sing kept getting caught in my throat. We tried all of the usual correction techniques, but nothing seemed to be working and I was getting frustrated.

Aliah asked me what I was thinking about when I was singing... and I told her that I was thinking about how the words kept getting stuck and how I couldn't seem to fix it.

"Aha, she said... that makes sense. When your thoughts are focused on what you're doing wrong... or what isn't working... it becomes pretty much impossible to make a change. Instead" she said, "try focusing on what you would like to be doing... on where you would like to feel the sound... see what happens."

Focus on what you hope for... not on whatever might be getting in the way.

I'm going to come back to this in a moment...

We are using this great resource from A Sanctified Art for our Lenten journey... the theme is "Full to the Brim".

The intro to this theme says "Full to the Brim is an invitation – into a radically different Lent, into a full life. It's an invitation to be authentically who you are, to counter scarcity and injustice at every turn, to pour out even more grace wherever it is needed. It disrupts the scarcity mentality that capitalism, oppression, or hierarchy can plant inside of us. When we allow ourselves to be filled to the brim with God's lavish love, that love spills over...

Full to the Brim doesn't ignore or deny sin and suffering. It doesn't absolve accountability for wrongdoing. Instead, it contextualizes our faith. If love is our beginning, how can we live our lives led by love's promises? It reminds us to live fully, as we pursue justice and hope, or express grief and gratitude. And so, this lent, let us trust – fully – that we belong to God. Let us increase our capacity to receive and give grace. Let us discover the expansive love God dreams for us."

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter and for many that includes some kind of fasting... or giving something up.

The intention, I think, is to practice self-control – so that we can focus our attention on Jesus – and his journey into Jerusalem.

Now I don't know about you... but when I am fasting – say fasting for a blood test... I can't stop thinking about that first cup of coffee... or my morning yogurt. Thoughts of these things become consuming.

So right now... let's all try not to think about... daffodils. I'm willing to bet that none of you were thinking about daffodils a minute ago... and now you are.

Telling ourselves not to think about something is a sure-fire way to get us thinking about it. Similarly... if I'm feeling really anxious and someone says to me "don't feel anxious" – I tend to feel more anxious. But, if instead someone were to say to me "take a deep breath and focus all of your attention right now on God's love" ... there's a possibility that my anxiety will subside.

It is so hard to talk about focusing on the positive things... on the things we are grateful for... on the blessings in our lives without it sounding like we're trying to minimize or pretend like the troubles in our lives and in the world don't exist.

But that really isn't the goal... troubles do exist and no amount of ignoring them will make them go away.

However, how much more prepared are we to deal with the trouble when we are doing so from a place of love?

How much more will we be able to live out of our faith – I live in the world with love and compassion – when we really and truly believe that we are loved – deeply, unconditionally, fully – loved by God?

I kind of feel like I say "God loves you" so often that maybe its losing its meaning. That is the foundation of my own faith... doesn't mean I always fully believe it for myself... but it is the message I am always returning to...

but I need to return to it with more intention than just thinking "great, God loves me... how nice".

Its like when you hear someone say I love you... almost out of habit... they just become words – nice words, maybe reassuring words... but it feels very different when another person takes the time to look deep into your eyes – holding you tight with their gaze... and they say "I love you" ... not as an extra or an obligatory statement – but as a truth so deep that it makes your heart skip a beat.

But in order for that type of intimacy to happen... we need to pause long enough to be held.

We can know on a surface level that God loves us... and that knowledge has held me up in times of doubt for sure... but God's love is so much... soooo much... deeper than the surface. It is profound.

And it's the knowledge... the embodiment of this profound love that gave Jesus what he needed to continue on his way into Jerusalem knowing what was waiting for him there.

It was this love that filled his own heart with love and compassion – even for those who were persecuting him... those who wanted him dead.

Love is the most powerful force – it assures, it comforts, it heals... it energizes... inspires... motivates...

Love has been the foundation of so many great movements for positive change in the world... certainly, all that Jesus did in his ministry of teaching, healing, befriending those who others despised and challenging corrupt and unjust people and systems of power... all of it was done out of love – and his life of love was possible because he knew... he embodied... the love of God. Jesus was not separate from God's love.

And that same love that moved in and through Jesus... moves in and through us. It is no less – and that is true regardless of who you are – of what you've done or not done... it just is.

I want to play a clip for you of an interview Oprah did with Maya Angelou... an American poet, storyteller and civil rights activist. She understood the profoundness of God's love...

*(play clip)*

Are we that confident? that amazed? that grateful for God's love?  
And what difference would it make in our lives if we were?

Maya Angelou said, "I can do anything"

So I know... we all know... that there's a lot happening in the world to remind us of the destructive power of hate, anger, greed...

and, of course, really taking time – being intentional – about filling ourselves up to the brim with God's love isn't going to make any of that go away.

But at the very least... isn't it better to live in a struggling world feeling loved than to live in that same world feeling – unloved – unworthy of love... or worse, insignificant?

And isn't it possible that allowing ourselves to be filled to the brim with God's lavish love will create a stream of love flowing out of us and into the world.

I wonder if the antidote to our collective weariness... and wariness... is to practice seeing ourselves as God sees us.

Now here's an important thing to remember – God doesn't want us to feel bad about ourselves. There's quite enough of that going around already... and there's nothing life-giving about it. Nor do I believe that guilt helps us to feel closer to God... quite the opposite! So, what if, instead of finding fault with our imperfections... and the imperfections we witness around us... we practice greeting them with compassion? Instead of groaning about every shortcoming, we just acknowledge how hard it is to consistently be the kind, courageous, loving people we long to be.

Maybe if we are able to regard ourselves with the eyes of love rather than judgement, it will be easier for us to trust in God's grace and unconditional love – something most of us find hard to do.

So, I invite us... throughout this season of Lent... to take up the practice of seeing ourselves as God sees us? Not as perfect... but as beloved?

And we really need to take this seriously.

Truly... I believe our quality of life depends on it.

One of the contributors to this Lenten resource... Rev. Sarah Speed wrote this  
“I crave a life overflowing with beauty, drenched in gratitude, and full to the brim with meaningful relationships. I crave space to revel in God's goodness. I crave a life where we don't forgive once, but seventy times seventy – forgiveness in excess. I crave a life, a love, a faith that is expansive, full to the brim and overflowing. So, this lent we are flipping the script. We are releasing the Lenten view that drills down on devotion as a response to guilt, sin or grief. Instead, we are leaning into the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection to open doors to this expansive life we trust God has in mind for us.”

My prayer for all of us is that we will find our place under God's loving... protective wing... that from that place of love, we will learn to see with the eyes of love and discover ourselves and our world transformed.

**Hymn: “In You There is a Refuge” (MV 84)**

**In you there is a refuge,  
In you we find our peace.  
When all we know is chaos  
may our trust in you increase.**

In you there is a silence,  
In you our minds are clear.  
When all we hear is discord  
may your quiet draw us near.

In you there is a vision,  
In you we learn to dream.  
When all we see is desert  
may you be our living stream.

In you there is a future,  
In you we find our way.  
When hope has shed its brightness  
may you show us a new day.

### **Acknowledging our Offerings/Prayer of Dedication** (McClure - Debra)

When we choose to walk in the Way of Jesus we commit to the ways of compassion and justice. Our offerings give witness to our commitment. The giving of our gifts and the giving of our very lives speaks to our faithfulness.

And so, with deep gratitude we acknowledge and celebrate the many anyways the disciples of Jesus, you and I, share our time, our talent and our treasure. We celebrate the strength of our witness today and long for the day we can offer even more.

Let us pray: **Gracious God, gifts given this week come from our hands and our hearts. They reflect our commitment to your church and they show our willingness to walk in your Way. Bless their use. Encourage our generosity and focus our actions, so that we might be a blessing to others. We pray as followers of Jesus. Amen**

### **Offertory Song:** The Church is Wherever (#579 VU vs. 2)

**The church is wherever God's people are helping,  
caring for neighbours in sickness and need.**

**The church is wherever God's people are sharing  
the words of the Bible in gift and in deed.**

### **Prayers of the People/Lord's Prayer** (Radville)

Gather us God as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, for we are in desperate need of your embrace.

Our world longs for an embrace of peace. We pray for peace in the Ukraine. We pray that shelling might stop, and women might be able to have their babies in hospitals that are safe and play with their children in the fresh air - not in bomb shelters. We pray for all of those who are fleeing that they might find warm welcome and rest. We pray that families might be reunited, and that sunflower, tomato and other garden seeds might be planted once again. Help us not to forget that many have fled war torn lands around the world and so we pray for all refugees lingering still in camps, waiting outrageously long for



paperwork to be processed so that they might begin their lives again. Make us peacemakers

Our community longs for an embrace of connection. We pray for those who struggle to find adequate housing and who struggled with issues of mental health and of addiction. We pray for the courage to see the face of God in those who struggle and to do what we can to create communities of respect and care. Open our eyes to see.

Our church longs for an embrace of energy. We pray for our United Church of Canada as General Counsel meets to do the work of our church. We pray also for our individual communities of faith, where volunteers are stretched and yet the call of the gospel is strong. We pray for energy and renewed commitment that our faith families might continue to witness to generosity, justice, and God's abundant love. Refresh our commitment.

Our lives long for an embrace of healing. We pray for those who have received difficult diagnosis, who live with chronic illness, who provide care to those who are ill. We pray for families where relationships are strained, and divorce is whispered. We pray for the grieving. We pray for children who struggle through learning challenges, anxiety, or trauma. Create in us a tender heart.

We take a moment now to offer the prayers of our hearts. Sharing with you, companion God, the places in our lives that need your gathering, your brooding. (silence)

We ask your blessing upon us and others who work for peace and who, in the Ukraine, are sharing what they have and working to help.

We ask your blessing upon us and others who connect with those in our communities working in food banks, safe injection sights and homeless shelters to provide new avenues to healing and health.

We ask your blessing upon us and others who have energy for the care of our churches. We celebrate all involved for folks who crunch numbers and paint the entry and for those who visit the home bound and who play the piano. We celebrate all who do what they can.

We ask your blessing upon our everyday lives that strengthen by your care we might live Jesus abundant love into today and tomorrow.

Gather us God as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and hear us as we pray using the words Jesus taught us.

Our Mother and 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

**Hymn:** "Love Us Into Fullness" (MV 81)

**Love us into fullness,  
touch us with your grace;  
Jesus, in your mercy,  
draw us to your face.**

Love us into fullness,  
hold us in your care,  
cheer us with your presence  
here and everywhere.

Love us into fullness  
and we will be strong;  
Jesus, walk beside us,  
fill our hearts with song.

## **Benediction** (Carlyle)

As you leave this place,  
may you be awestruck by the beauty of this world.  
May you laugh, and may it be contagious.  
May you overflow with love for those around you.  
May you be bubbling with hope and quick to point out joy.  
And in all of your living, and breathing, and being,  
may you find yourself full to the brim with God's Holy Spirit,  
and may it change your life.  
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—  
go in peace, full to the brim. Amen.

## **Sung Blessing:** "May you run and not be weary" (#91 W&P)

May you run and not be weary.  
May your heart be filled with song.  
And may the love of God continue  
to give you hope and keep you strong.  
And may you run and not be weary.  
May your life be filled with joy.  
And may the road you travel  
always lead you home.