

Pre-Lenten Time of Worship for Clergy Covenant Groups 2010

Recorded in the Office of Indiana Bishop Mike Coyner with the Rev. Tim Burchill, chair of the Order of Elders; the Rev. Jennifer Pollard, chair of the Order of Deacons and the Rev. Don Ransford, who leads the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members.

Welcome and Opening Prayer – Tim Burchill

We welcome you to this time of worship as the Clergy of the Indiana Conference prepare to lead our people through the season of Lent as a preparation for Easter. This time of worship is designed to be used by our clergy in their Clergy Covenant Groups, or it can also be used by individual clergy as their private devotions.

I'm Tim Burchill pastor at St. Andrew United Methodist Church in West Lafayette and am the Chair of the Order of Elders. I am joined by the other leaders of our Clergy here in Indiana: Jennifer Pollard who is Chair of the Order of Deacons, and Don Ransford who leads the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members. We will be leading this time of worship and will hear a message from our Bishop, Mike Coyner, who will also invite us to observe a Holy Lent. We are following a basic service and prayers from *The Book of Worship* for Ash Wednesday and the Lenten season.

Let us prepare for this time of worship by praying together:
The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Response: And also with you.

O God, your glory is always to have mercy.

Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast to the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Opening Hymn – “Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days” UM Hymnal number 269

Jennifer Pollard: I invite you to hear the words from the old hymn “Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days” and to reflect upon the words as a way of opening our lives to these forty days of Lent.

Lord, who throughout these forty days
For us did fast and pray,
Teach us with thee to mourn our sins,
And close by thee to stay.

As thou with Satan did contend,
And didst the vict'ry win,
O give us strength in thee to fight,
In thee to conquer sin.

And through these days of penitence,
And through thy Passiontide,
Yea, evermore, in life and death,
Jesus! With us abide.

Abide with us, that so, this life
Of suffering over past,
An Easter of unending joy
We may attain at last. Amen.

First Scripture reading – Joel 2:1-2, and 12-17 – Don Ransford

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill.
Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming.
It is close at hand – a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.
Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes,
Such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come.

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.”
Rend your heart and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.
Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing – grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.
Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.
Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the temple porch and the altar.
Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples, “Where is their God?”

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 – Jennifer Pollard

We implore you on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. As God’s fellow servants we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says: “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 6:1-6 and 16-21 – Tim Burchill

Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.
So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.
And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand praying in the synagogues and on the street corners, to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

And when you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

These readings are for us the word of the Lord!

Response: Thanks be to God.

A Homily – Bishop Mike Coyner – “Turn Around”

There are three dangers that keep us from turning around.

1. Self-deception
2. Self-righteousness
3. Self-hatred

Help me turn around and turn toward God.

Response to the Sermon – led by Jennifer Pollard

We invite you to respond to the Bishop’s message by praying with each other. Perhaps you can begin this time of prayer by sharing with each other the ways in which you want God to help you to “turn around” during this season of Lent. Follow that with a time of praying for each other. Please pause or stop this DVD while you do so, and when you are ready to continue, start the DVD once again. God bless you as you pray for one another.

Pause the DVD video

The Invitation to the Observance of Lenten Discipline – Bishop Mike

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

The early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation.

During this season, converts to the faith were prepared by Holy Baptism. It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to participation in the life of the Church.

In this way the whole congregation was reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith.

I invite you, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent:

By self-examination and repentance;

By prayer, fasting, and self-denial;

And by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word.

To make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us know bow in prayer before our Creator and Redeemer. Let us have a time of silent prayer, and then I will lead us in prayer and the Lord's Prayer together.

Silent Prayer

Almighty God, we need your power and grace to turn around our lives.

Help us to turn toward You this season of Lent and Easter, and help us to lead your people to turn toward You.

Forgive us for any ways in which we make a "show" of being religious, and turn us toward true and honest devotion to you.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who teaches us to pray together:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be they name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction – Don Ransford

Thank you for being with us in the time of worship and preparation.

And now, may the Lord of God, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Power of the Holy Spirit, abide with you, now and forever. Amen.