

Order of Worship February 7, 2021

Words of Welcome

Hello you beloved person of God. Welcome to these words, that if we could gather together in person at church, would be uttered this day. We would sing them in the songs, hear them read and interpreted from the Sacred Text of the Christian faith, and offered in prayer. It is the Spirit of God who makes the words come alive, stirring our hearts and strengthening our souls as we set apart time to receive them – to take them in, in a sense eat them! Welcome to these words. May they be a source of nourishment in this time of pandemic turmoil.

May the lighting of a candle be a reminder of God's living presence within and all around.

Lighting of Christ Candle

One: We light this light

**All: in the name of the God who creates life
In the name of Saviour who loves life
In the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.**

Hymn: # 321 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, who rules all creation:

my soul, praise God who alone is your health and salvation.

Come, all who hear, sisters and brothers draw near, joining in glad adoration.

1. Praise to the Lord, who in all things so wondrously reigning
hides you with sheltering wings, ever gently sustaining.
Have you not seen how your heart's wishes have been
granted through God's kind ordaining?
2. Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work, who defends you;
surely God's merciful goodness here daily attends you;
ponder a new what the Almighty can do, when in great love God befriends you.
3. Praise to the Lord, and with all that is in me adoring,
all who have life and breath, come with glad praises outpouring!
Let the amen sound from God's people again, now and forever adoring!

Call to Worship and Prayer of Approach and Adoration – based on Psalm 147:1-11

Praise the Lord!

How good it is to sing praises to our God;

a song of praise is fitting, for God is gracious!

You, O Lord build up and gather the outcasts.

You heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds.

You Sovereign One, abundant in power with understanding beyond measure,

determine the number of stars and give to all of them their names.

You lift up the downtrodden and cast out evil, setting free the imprisoned spirit.

*We sing to you with thanksgiving
for you prepare rain for the earth,
make plants to grow,
and give food to all.*

God's delight and pleasure is not in physical strength or speed;

the Lord delights in those who show reverence,
in those who hope in God's steadfast love.

We praise you O God, for you are gracious more than we can imagine.

We hold you in high regard and hope in your steadfast love.

We want to reverence you in all things and to fix our hope in your steadfast love alone.

Amen.

Ministry of Music

Community Looking Back ~ Looking Ahead

Again, welcome to these words sent out and delivered to Knox-Calvin folks and friends – at least this is one way we can be joined in spirit when we cannot be joined in person. Bless be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love...

With this being the first Sunday in February, we extend birthday and anniversary greetings to all who are celebrating this month.

Before the experiences of the past week get stored away in the memory, take a moment to remember again what the days held.

Recall something from the week that was good, a high...

Recollect something that was hard, a low...

Reflect on a moment of being grateful...

Remember a moment of beauty...

And then give thanks to God for being with us in all the stuff of life – blessing us and shaping us and making life extraordinary in all its ups and downs.

If you would like to share a story with the rest of us, please email or phone 519-321-1942.

Song: # 662 Those who wait upon the Lord vs 1

Those who wait upon the Lord
shall renew their strength; they shall rise up on wings as eagles.
They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint;
help us, Lord, help us Lord in your way.

As we come to a time of reading and hearing an interpretation of Scripture, let us seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray.

Prayer of Illumination: Psalm 25:5

**Lead us in your truth, O God, and teach us,
for you are the God of our salvation.
For you we wait. Amen.**

Responsive Reading: Isaiah 40:28-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;

his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:29-39

WE pick up the story of Jesus and his newly called followers, Andrew and Simon, James and John from last week where they attended synagogue and were astounded at the authority of Jesus' teaching that even calls out unclean spirits.

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹ He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³² That evening, at sunset, they brought to him *all* who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³ And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴ And he cured *many* who were sick with various diseases, and cast out *many* demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵ In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷ When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸ He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹ And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The Word of God for you people of God. Thanks be to God.

Sermon: Renewed Strength

I received an email the other day from a colleague in ministry who has a connection with our family; she was at Redeemer University the same time as my daughter Kara-dee. Over the years our paths have crossed from time to time. She and her husband have a little boy the same age as my four-year-old grandson, Nolan. I had shared the news about the arrival of Ben and Paige's third child and her response was,

“Wow! They have three children now! That's exciting.
They also must be very tired.
I can only imagine. :)”

I thought the same thing when reading the story of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark this week. Wow, after a morning of teaching in the synagogue (last week's reading), then off to Simon and Andrew's home for lunch, restoring health to an aging mother-in-law, he must have been very tired. I hope Jesus was able to have a nap before the evening hours found him curing many who were sick or demon possessed whom they (? the disciples) brought to the door. Ministering to the sick has its rewards, but it is a demanding work. Who knows how late it was after the sun went down before the last of them headed for home? Perhaps I am projecting from this aging body of mine, but by the end of the day he must have been tired!

Now in these days of pandemic we too, know something of being tired. Perhaps not in the same way Jesus must have been on that first day of ministry as recorded in Mark, but tired nonetheless. In her January Reflection, PCC Moderator, Rev. Amanda Currie begins with a word of being tired. She writes,

“I've been feeling tired this week. Not tired in a physical sense, as I'm still getting enough sleep and exercise, and I'm eating well. But I'm tired of the COVID-19 pandemic. I miss seeing my congregation, and hugging them, and sharing food together, and all the other things we used to enjoy before this terrible plague began. And I'm tired of worrying—about the ones that are sick, and the ones that are grieving, the ones that are on the front lines, and the ones that are not staying as connected to the church community.” And she wonders if the rest of us are feeling tired too: “Tired of preaching to a camera or trying to worship in your living room. Tired of balancing work and home-schooling your kids. Tired of being alone. Tired of being scared. Tired of waiting and hoping and longing to be able to make plans again.”¹

¹ Rev. Currie's reflection is included at the end of the service. In it she speaks of meeting with Dr. Tam of the World Health Organization.

I would add to the list: tired of the social deprivation that comes with staying at home as much as possible, tired of not seeing smiles on faces, tired of wondering if I am doing enough, wondering if there is more we could be doing as a community of faith. I am tired of trying to convince Dad he needs new hearing aids. The temptation of getting into that box of frozen M&M gluten free peanut butter and jam bars set aside for company grows strong. And the other night when we were playing our evening game of rummy, I called Brian a so and so for not laying down his matching sets and winning a hand.

Yes, I am tired but even then, I consider myself fortunate, blessed to be living in wide open spaces, with a steady income. There are no children to tend to and Brian is good company (well, except for the odd hand of rummy!) Perhaps you can add more to this list of being fortunate... What we first thought would be a sprint has turned out to be a marathon and the tiredness is catching up to us. With the finish line still months away, the terrain is a steep uphill in these winter months as mounting Covid-19 cases land close to our north Wellington county doors. This pandemic mode is tiring. If we can just get into the warmer weather that is less hospitable to the virus, into the longer days of spring with the greening of the earth and all, closer to greater numbers of people being vaccinated, we are going to be okay. This too shall pass.

Yesterday I learned Dr. Jim has been reading about pandemics in the past and how they have a reputation for transforming the future; that human beings are not left the same as they were before the pandemic hit. It occurs to me that, of course we should be tired – whether we like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, we are in the middle of being shaped, molded into new ways of being human together. This is a hopeful thought – that the God who pursues us with goodness and mercy all our days is still sovereign, actively working to bring good out of this beast of a virus.

Jesus must have been very tired from a day packed full of being with people, teaching and healing the sick and calling out demons. Yet the next morning does not find him sleeping in. Before the sun is up, he is up; going to a deserted place, he prayed. Martin Luther, the one who sparked the protestant reformation, knew something about the significance of getting up early to pray. When once asked what his plans for the following day were, he answered: “Work, work, from early until late. In fact, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”

At its core, prayer is the practice of being present to God ² – whether we are doing all the talking or whether we are in the practice of meditating, sitting still, of being silence, just breathing and

² Barbara Brown Taylor in *An Altar in the World*

being present in the moment, attentive, opening our selves to the One whose greatest desire is to be with us. “Every moment of every day of our life God wanders in our inner garden, seeking our companionship,” writes Dr. David Benner in his book, *The Gift of Being Yourself*. Imagine, long before God is wanting for us to be useful, busy serving and working for the Kingdom of God, God seeks our companionship; God, the Lover of our souls, the Lover of life, just wants to enjoy our company, just wants for us to sit awhile basking in the delight of the Maker!

This is enough to inspire me to practice being still, to simply breathe and wait. 20 minutes twice a day is what another author recommends. I am not very good at it – after a couple of deep breaths my attention wanders off in all kinds of directions - what to make for dinner, why did she say that, the bill that needs to be paid, what material I might have for making a mask... but as Nadia Bolz-Weber reminds me in quite an excellent sermon on Pandemic Meditation as Repentance,³

“the gift of meditation isn’t in being able to maintain a still mind (although that’s great), the gift of meditation is in the messing it up – it’s in being carried away in thinking and then realizing you are thinking and then returning to the meditation. Meditation’s magic is in the returning. Not in the never having left... Theologically speaking, there’s a word for that. It’s repentance... repentance or metanoia in Greek is far more than cleaning up your act. Repentance means changing your mind and changing your direction and changing your heart. And the cool thing is that in Greek it implies a continual action, not something that happens just once and then you’re good.... This is the beauty of our faith, that repentance gets to be a continual action.”

Practicing being present to God is continually returning to breathing in the breath of God, breathing out the wind of the Spirit, returning to the present moment where God forever dwells. It is not about being good at it, it is simply about being intentional.

The time spent with God serves Jesus well. When Simon finds him, exclaiming, “Everyone is searching for you,” Jesus does not cave into the intoxication of everyone wanting him, needing him. His ego is not stroked; he will not let the crowds determine who he is or what he is about. “Let us go...so that I may proclaim the message... for that is what I came to do.”

It is not unreasonable that we are tired these days, the uncertainty of the future challenging our faith and what we are to be about. Covid fatigue can be expected. In the tiredness and uncertainty there is a fountain of strength from which to drink. God does not grow weary or faint. It is God alone who renews our strength in this journey. Drink deeply.

³ <https://thecorners.substack.com/p/a-pandemic-sermon-on-meditation-as>

Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength
 they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
 they shall run and not be weary,
 they shall walk and not faint.
 Amen.

RESPOND TO THE WORD

Silent Reflection

Take a few minutes to just breathe... in and out, in and out...

Prayer of Confession

We confess O God, we sometimes look for relief in this time of pandemic in all the wrong places when all you want us to do is come and wait on you... softly and tenderly you call us to come home.

And so we pray,

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy

Lord Jesus, grant us your peace. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Just as repentance is a continual ongoing action, so is God's forgiveness. Where regret is real, pardon is granted and we are set free to begin again and again and again and again. Thanks be to God.

Offering Invitation

During a sermon on money, the pastor said, "Money isn't important in the afterlife because in heaven, there is no money." It was at this point that one of the listeners leaned over and whispered to her mother, "Did you hear that Mom, we must be in heaven already!"

While there may not be money in heaven, we can do lots of important things with money here on earth. Let us be intentional in giving this week – giving of our resources, giving of our time and energy in caring for others in safe ways.

Prayer of Dedication, Thanksgiving and Intercession concluding with the Lord's prayer

As the beloved of God, precious and treasured, let us pray.

It is with gratitude that we give O God;

grateful we have more than enough to share,

grateful to practice again the art of giving,

grateful for the amazing things that can happen when we put our little bits together,

grateful for the work of this church in this community and around the world,

grateful for the invitation to be active, useful participants in the coming of your kingdom.

We give you thanks for moments of quiet and contemplation that restore us,

and help us perceive your Spirit at work in the world and in our own lives.

Teach us to trust in your strength,

so that we can live with confidence and courage even in the midst of stress and anxiety. These days of pandemic are still difficult and we need to know you are near in our lonely times. Meet us in that place of deep stillness within us all.

In the quiet of this moment we hand over to you
all those things stirring within us today:

Anything that has been distracting or hurtful...

(Hold a silence)

Anything that makes us worry or brings sleepless nights...

(Hold a silence)

Our hopes and dreams for the future...

(Hold a silence)

and for the lives of those we love... the elderly who once sat among us at Knox-Calvin, along with Nancy, Jessie, Henk, and Lois

(Hold a silence)

We hold before you the needs and hopes of those we know who need your presence, especially remembering those facing grief and loss...

(Hold a silence)

We pray for wisdom for the leaders of our world...

(Hold a silence)

We pray that peace and prosperity will begin to flourish in places facing war, famine, and disaster, and we pray for the work of Presbyterian World Service & Development serving in these situations...

(Hold a silence)

We pray that those who manage the world economy find honest, just and generous ways to respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic... that vaccines would be made available to all

(Hold a silence)

We pray that the dignity of each creature be honoured and the earth itself be treasured...

(Hold a silence)

May peace with justice thrive in the world you love.

And now we pray as you Jesus, teach us saying,

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Sending Out Hymn: #334 God who gives to life its goodness (tune Joyful, joyful we adore you)

1. God who gives to life its goodness, God creator of all joy,
God who gives to us our freedom, God who blesses tool and toy:
teach us now to laugh and praise you deep within, or shouted loud,
till the whole creation dances for your goodness, holy God.
2. God who fills the earth with beauty, God who binds each friend to friend,

God who names us co-creators, God who wills that chaos end:
grant us now creative spirits, minds responsive to your mind,
hearts and wills your rule extending, all our acts by Love refined.

Benediction

One: In work or in worship

All: God is with us

One: Gathered or scattered

All: God is with us

One: Now and always

All: God is with us.

May the Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from the other.