

Order of Worship May 16, 2021
Ascension Sunday ~ 7th Sunday of Easter

Words of Welcome

Hello beloved people of God. Even as farmers are working late into the night preparing the soil and planting the seed, pausing here on the Sabbath we give room for the Spirit to till the soil of our hearts and sow life-giving seeds of hope and peace, joy and love. Sprouting up and taking root within, we are made alive - well in our souls and able to act for the wellbeing of this world that God so loves. Welcome to these words of church.

If you like, light a candle and let the light of the flame be a symbol 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.

This past Thursday marked 40 days after Easter, the day when the Christian faith acknowledges Jesus "ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father." Let us worship the risen - ascended Christ and with poetic words and melody, 'Crown him with many crowns.'

Opening Hymn: # 274 Crown him with many crowns (vs 1, 2, 3)

1. Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the throne:
 hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own!
 Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died to be
 your Saviour and your matchless King through all eternity.

2. Crown him the Son of God, before the worlds began;
 let all who tread where he has trod, crown him the Son of Man,
 who every grief has known that wrings the human breast,
 and takes and bears them for his own, that all in him may rest.

3. Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave,
 and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.
 His glories now we sing who died and rose on high,
 who died eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.

Call to Worship

Leader: Alleluia, Christ is raised from the dead;

People: Christ is risen indeed

Leader: Alleluia, Christ is raised up into heaven;

People: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Heirs with Christ, God raises us up to life too.

People: Alleluia.

Prayer of Praise and Adoration concluding with the Lord's prayer
Trinity of Love,

we praise you for the rising up of the sun again this morning,
the darkness giving way to light and colour and warmth.

We praise you for new life rising up out of the dark earth and out of bare branches,
- every leaf of spring time evidence of resurrection!

We praise you for the new life that rises up in us too,
as the cold of winter gives way to the warmth of spring.

And we praise you for the new life that rises up in us as we yield
to the steady warmth of your love

melting away the coldness of judgment and unforgiveness,
the coldness of guilt and ego pride,
the coldness of self-ishness and lack of concern.

In this time of pausing to take in Holy Scripture, poetic hymn words, opening our hearts in prayer, may your eternal, abundant life rise up in us Lord Jesus. We hunger for you. Create in us a clean heart that we may more and more be becoming your faithful people – resting in you, given new life and strength to meet the challenges of this day. We pray in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Inspiring Quote:

Grace is when God gives us good things we do not deserve.
Mercy is when God spares us from the bad things we deserve.
Blessings are when God is generous with both.
Truly, we can never run out of reasons to thank God.
God is good all the time.”¹

Community Looking Back ~ Looking Ahead

Again a word of welcome to these church words. We have made it through 14 months of varying degrees of pandemic restrictions. Yeh! Who would have thought that would be possible last year at this time! Let us hang in there practicing public health measures. As 14th century mystic, Julian of Norwich said (as horse drawn carts carrying the dead succumbing from the bubonic plague passed in front of her window), “All will be well and all manner of things will be well.” Our strength does not come from favorable, external circumstance. Our strength comes from God – those who wait for God shall renew their strength; it comes from within. When the heart is faint, pause a moment, be still – the silence may nudge you to pick up the phone and make a call just to hear the voice of another at the other end of the line. Who knows how your call may just be with the other is waiting for too.

¹ Mindful Christianity Today

This time of looking back is an opportunity to recall the days of the past week and remember again those moments that stay with us – perhaps there have been moments of laughter, of struggle, of hope, of learning; moments of gratitude or wonder and awe... take time to share the story with some one, even send along an email to be included in next week's worship or give a phone call.

What has the week held?

Isaiah 6:3 says, "The whole earth is full of the glory of God." The flowering crab apple tree on the front lawn is glorious! I wonder when you too, have been caught up in the whole earth being full of the glory of God... not only in nature, but in human encounters that have stirred the heart.

Financial Update:

The average giving for the month of April for past 3 years: \$8,423

April 2021: \$9,001

Well done, good and faithful folks!!

Looking ahead.

Tuesday May 18, Session meets via zoom at **7:45**. The link and agenda will be sent out earlier in the day. The meeting will follow the emergent Presbytery meeting at 7pm to receive the call of the Rev. Marty Molengraff to St. Andrew's Kitchener.

General Assembly meets June 6-9. I will be attending this virtual gathering as a commissioner.

I am mindful of all the farmers out there who are busy working the land these days, planting crops, doing what they can to grow food. And then it is up to soil and the spark of Godlife hidden away in tiny seeds to do the rest!

Song: # 807 We plough the fields and scatter

1. We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand:
you send the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine, and soft refreshing rain.
All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
we thank you, Lord, we thank you, Lord for all your love.

2. We thank you, our provider, for all things bright and good,
the seedtime and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer for all your love imparts,
but that which you most welcome: our humble, thankful hearts.
All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;
we thank you, Lord, we thank you, Lord for all your love.

LISTEN TO THE WORD

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.**

I am grateful for Dirk's words in last week's meditation where he writes, "Eternal life has as much to do with a certain quality of life as it does with the quantity of life. Eternal life has as much to do with the here-and-now as it does with the there-and-then." His words took me back to 1 John 3:14-16 where love is the defining quality of life. When we love one another we live alive. When we are gripped with looking down at or revenge or unforgiveness or despising or hate – life is drained out of us and our spirits die.

1 John 3:14-16

14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. **16** We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

Gospel Reading: John 17:6-21 Jesus prays for his disciples.

I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸ for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

²⁰ "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me

In the first 14 verses of Acts 1 we hear the story of Jesus ascending up into the heavens, out of sight. Read on to find out what the disciples then do.

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶ “Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— ¹⁷ for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” ²³ So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

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

Sermon: The Place of Prayer

In the gospel reading, Jesus and his followers have finished eating supper and have shared in a long leisurely conversation, the kind that can take place when the body is nourished and the forks and spoons are at rest. By the time Jesus turned from them and looked to heaven and spoke directly to God, it must have been sinking into their hearts and minds that something big was about to happen, and it wasn’t going to be good. Jesus was leaving them but he was sending them a helper; that the hour was coming when they would be scattered, and they will leave him alone, that they would face persecution in the world. How were they to get their heads around such talk.

And then Jesus begins to pray this a deep heartfelt prayer that has come to be known as the great priestly prayer. I wonder what it was like for them to overhear and catch a glimpse of the intimacy Jesus shared with God the Father, the deep intertwining of their relationship. Over and over they hear, “you and me.” This work Jesus has been doing has been in close conjunction with the Father. And I wonder what it was like for these followers of Jesus to hear him pray for them. I wonder what it was like for them to hear they belonged to God the Father – “They are yours,” Jesus prays, “you gave them to me.” I wonder what it was like for them to hear Jesus’ confidence in them – that they have received all the words intended and that they know the truth that Jesus was from God; that they have believed; that Jesus has been glorified in them. I wonder what it was like for them to hear Jesus expressing his belief in them, recognizing their faithfulness and fidelity over the years. “They have kept your word.” And I wonder what it was like to hear Jesus praying for their future, for God’s protection; praying that they may be one even as the Jesus is one with his Father. In the midst of hearing how the world is going to hate them did they hear that part about joy – that they may have the joy of Jesus made complete in

them. Imagine hearing Jesus pray for us – that his joy would be made complete in us! Joy. Jesus wants us to know joy.

Hearing the prayers of another for us does something to the heart. Dorothy Wilson was the United Church minister at a three-point charge one of which was Sprucedale, Ontario – up there, north of Huntsville. She and her husband Erwin were great friends of my Morden in-laws and over the years we had many lovely visits with them. On one of our last visits we had nicely arrived, the table was set, but before sitting down to eat we joined hands and Dorothy began to pray. I remember that moment; her gracious prayer warming my heart. She prayed giving thanks for the Morden family, for their long and deep friendship over the years, the laughter they shared, the hard stuff too. She prayed for the Mordens there at her table. Overhearing her talking to God about us revealed something of who she was and who the Morden family was to her. Dorothy and Erwin are long gone now, my Morden in-laws too, but the memory stays with me.

I wonder how the memory of this prayer of Jesus stayed with his disciples too. In those last moments before the world of the disciples is turned upside down, in those last moments before Jesus faces his crucifixion, Jesus stops everything and prays for those he loves. Preacher David Lose points out, “prayer isn’t simply a routine, it’s not just a spiritual exercise, it’s not even merely a healthy part of our faith lives. It may be all of those things, but it’s also something more. Prayer is love. Taking the time to name the hopes, joys, concerns, fears, and thanksgiving of someone you know and bring all of that into the presence of God through prayer is an act of love, plain and simple. It expresses your care, your concern, and your compassion for the one(s) for whom you are praying. And it expresses your trust that they are as important to God as they are to you.” He concludes saying, “Prayer is love.”

Fast forward to some 43 days later. The followers of Jesus have experienced the joy of Jesus’ resurrection, the joy of Jesus showing up from time to time, the joy of oneness, such that even Thomas who could not believe until he saw for himself, was still able to be with the others. And now their beloved Jesus has ascended up, up until hid in a cloud. Jesus is gone. The men in white say he will return in the same way they saw him go into heaven.

Unlike the last time Jesus disappears, this time there is no talk of going back to fishing, of heading home to Emmaus; the doors are not locked behind them in fear. No, this time they hang together, even including certain women, constantly devoting themselves to prayer. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers are there too – these ones who at one point in Jesus’ ministry had come to see him and Jesus disowned them saying, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” Luke 8:21. They are there too. Peter again takes the lead, and after a few words of explaining the need to replace the one who was lost, we hear Peter pray. He may take the lead, but he turns to God for help! He prays. His prayer revealed a deep trust in God knowing them, a deep trust that God would show them who to choose to replace Judas.

How far these followers of Jesus have come. Having done the work, they live into the future trusting and praying and waiting, secured in love.

Prayer is love. Prayer is the essence of spending time with God. And just like relationships develop when people spend time together, our relationship with God grows when we spend time in prayer. There are no short cuts.

19th century philosopher Soren Kirkegaard observed it does not always hold true in the visible world, those who work are the ones who gets to eat. In the visible world, even those who do not work get to eat. But in the world of spiritual things, it does hold true - only those who work receive the reward. Only those who do the work of giving get to enjoy the rewards of being generous. Only those who do the work of going to church on a steady basis get to experience the richness of belonging to a community of faith. Only those who do the work of reading and meditating on the Sacred text will know the strength and grounding that the work affords. Only those who do the work of setting aside a day to rest experience the benefit of having rested. There are no short cuts in the spiritual world. Only those who do the work of sitting still, of pausing to pray get to experience the benefits of praying. Only those who are in the practice of praying come to a place of being comfortable in the silence when there is nothing to be said, like long time friends or elderly couples who sit silently together in peace. In these lock down days it is the practice of sitting still with God that grounds me and settles me. It cannot be denied.

Christian psychologist David Benner writes in his book, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, “The starting point for learning to simply spend time with God is learning to do this with Jesus. Spending time with Jesus allows us to ground our ‘God-knowing’ in the concrete events of a concrete life.” and spending time meditating, reading, allowing the Spirit of God to help us imaginatively enter into the events of the life of Christ, this is prayer. Jesus is of God. God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his son. Whoever has the Son has life.

Prayer is life. Prayer is not magic. Prayer connects us with God’s deeper wisdom, power, and insight. Prayer is being present to the One who is always present with us. Prayer is being in the moment. Now you finish the sentence: Prayer is....

Amen.

RESPOND TO THE WORD

Silent Reflection Take a few minutes to sit quiet with these sermon words. What catches your attention? Is there a new thought, a new perspective? What is worth hanging onto? Is there anything lacking? What more would you add?

Prayer of Confession

We confess O God, life gets busy and the urgent things end up stealing away time for important things like pausing to be still with you. And we are left bereft of your good help and wisdom...

we are bereft of being secured in your love and care...bereft of a deeping relationship and joy made complete

One: ...and so we pray.

**All: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Lord Jesus grant us your peace. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Where regret is real pardon is granted and there is grace enough for new beginnings in every moment and encounter of life. Let us go and begin again in the grace of God. God is always waiting...

Hymn: Sweet hour of prayer (not found in the Book of Praise, but perhaps in your memories!)

Here is a rendition by Alan Jackson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zNuYcplBmk>

1. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care
And bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes known
In seasons of distress and grief my soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter's snare, by Thy return, sweet hour of prayer

2. Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, the joys I feel, the bliss I share
Of those whose anxious spirits burn, with strong desires for Thy return
With such I hasten to the place where God my Savior shows His face
And gladly take my station there and wait for Thee, sweet hour of prayer

Offering

Tucking enough money into my pocket for 2 dozen eggs, Bella and I headed to Petra's place. Petra lives a couple roads east of us. She is our egg lady. The eggs will be there in a cooler outside her back door. No sooner had I put the money in the box and collected up 2 dozen that Petra came out of the nearby shed and called out, "Kathy, take another dozen. We have lots!" She blesses me.

We have lots! In this coming week let us step out and simply give – give of our resources, give of our time and energy, give of patience and kindness and a listening ear...

Prayer of Dedication, prayers of thanksgiving and intercession, the Lord's Prayer

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

Gracious God, you give and give and give and give. We are grateful for the multitude of ways our lives are blessed with lots!

And we give thanks for health and strength enough to behold your glory in nature.

We give thanks for health and strength enough to love another and know ourselves loved.

We give thanks for your graces of healing restoring our bodies and souls.

In this moment of silence we pray for those situations and persons who lay heavy on our hearts.

We remember the elderly who once sat among us:

Fred & Peggy Roger, Mary Stoddart, Roeli Wassink, Isabel McCutcheon, Eldie Weber, Irene Fisk, Elizabeth Gamble, Gerald Hattle. We pray strength for Henk Zemmeling and Fred Newman. We remember Jamie Howes, his sister Rosanne and brother Paul in the death of their mother, Shirley. Aid them in the journey of grief we pray.

O God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life,
 You have begun the work of creating a new world,
 a world where justice is known,
 where freedom and healing are available to all people.
 We pray for the places in the world that are caught up in violence – Israel and Palestine,
 where people are held captive or struggle under oppressive powers,
 and where sickness prevails, and medical resources are scarce – we are mindful of India.
(Silence for a count of ten)
 Grant those affected courage and perseverance through your Spirit.
 May people everywhere find the fullness of life you intend for us all.

You have begun the work of creating a new community,
 a community where love is shared, and all find a sense of belonging.
 We pray for groups who are made to feel like they don't belong,
 for families that caught up in tension or strife,
 and for those who feel isolated or desperate because no one seems to care.
 Protect us O God, from apathy and indifference that leaves us thinking only about ourselves.
(Silence for a count of ten)
 Grant them all courage and comfort through your Spirit.
 May people everywhere find the fullness of life you intend for us all.

You have begun the work of making a new creation,
 a creation where all that has been broken is being restored,
 where all that has been distorted is made right,
 and what has been polluted or damaged is renewed.
 We pray for the earth, the places where its natural balances are threatened
 and species put at risk by human exploitation.
(Silence for a count of ten)
 Send your healing Spirit to renew the earth and make us wiser stewards.
 May creatures everywhere know the fullness of life you intend for us all.

As you work towards making all things new,
 we pray for renewal in our churches and ministries,
 for leaders tired out by the responsibilities of coping with pandemic demands,
 and for church folks longing to be together again in worship and fellowship.
 The world is watching us, your church, specially when it comes to how we treat the poor, the
 marginalized, the differing gender identities. In all our diversity, protect us from divisiveness.
 We pray for the upcoming work and discerning of General Assembly.

(Silence for a count of ten)

And we pray as you Jesus teach us, saying together

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.

Going Forth Hymn: # 621 God be with you till we meet again

1. God be with you till we meet again; loving counsels guide, uphold you,
with a shepherd's care enfold you: God be with you till we meet again.
2. God be with you till we meet again, unseen wings protecting, hide you,
daily manna still provide you: God be with you till we meet again.
3. God be with you till we meet again; when life's perils thick confound you,
put unfailing arms around you: God be with you till we meet again.

Benediction

In work and worship **God is with us.**

Gathered and scattered, **God is with us**

Now and always **God is with us.**

May God watch between me and you while we are absent one from the other.

Closing Song #819 Awake, arise, oh sing a new song

Awake, arise, oh sing a new song of joy and celebration.

A new day has come; bring praise to the Son of God, of God.

Lectionary Readings for May 23 – Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-21 or Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;

Romans 8:22-27 or Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

Prayer List

Fred & Peggy Roger

Roeli Wassink

Eldie Weber

Elizabeth Gamble

Henk Zemmeling

Mary Stoddart

Isabel McCutcheon

Irene Fisk

Gerald Hattle

Fred Newman

Please be in touch if there are others you would like added to the prayer list. 519-321-1942.

Moment for Mission

Transform Online Course

Last fall, ministry leaders from across Canada came together for The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Transform online course. Over four weeks, Rick Morse—co-creator of the New Beginnings church renewal program and author of *Making a Congregational Plan that Makes Sense*—challenged leaders to imagine what it means to faithfully respond to God's mission and engage others to be missional. The course, which was made possible through gifts to Presbyterians Sharing, equipped leaders with the transformative tools, principles and insights necessary to discern God's call for their ministries' futures and create plans for moving forward.