

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

September 20, 2020

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, September 20th

Email dave@st-andrews.ca to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Welcome (Greeter – Phil Thurston)

Welcome to worship here at St. Andrew's United Church. Wherever you join us from, I invite you to take this moment to look at your space around you. You are on holy ground, as we are here.

As you can see, we are still recording worship online, not yet gathering physically in a sanctuary, together, but distanced. The St. Andrew's leadership team, your Council, chose to wait an extra week; we chose to be cautious, in order to monitor the COVID situation before inviting the community of faith together physically. We are hoping that we might gather to worship on September 27 with a full list of precautions in place. Council will make the final decision about this on September 21. Please check the NEWS, our Facebook page, and website for further updates about when we will be in the sanctuary again.

So, we are thankful that you can join us for worship today. At the end of this video you will also find other ways to connect with us: our website and Facebook information, and you can subscribe to the weekly emailed NEWS by emailing Alison at the church email (church@st-andrews.ca).

Now, let us worship God.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

This is holy ground, very sacred to us. Sacred especially to the First Peoples on whose land we worship this morning. We, here at St. Andrew's United Church, worship on the traditional territories both of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, land where the Robinson Huron Treaty was made in 1850, a Treaty that was never honoured by the colonizers of this land. Whose traditional territory are you worshipping on today?

We recognize the long history of our First Nations and Métis peoples; we give thanks for their stewardship of the land throughout the ages. Let us, all of us, Treaty people, commit ourselves anew to the work of healing, justice and reconciliation.

Lighting the Christ Candle

We take a breath. We pause before we enter worship. Take a moment to breathe in. God's spirit is everywhere, like the very breath that invigorates your vital organs. Together we light the Christ candle, but what does it mean? Does it, does our worship today, change anything? A candle seems small and insignificant in the larger scheme of things, but we come like flickering candles, Loving God. We come, feeling small and insignificant sometimes. Ordinary, yet, God in your baffling wisdom in Bible story after story, you choose the most ordinary people to accomplish the most extraordinary things.

You give abundance, Holy One, when we are open to it, and you invite us to share that abundance, and to become whole. We light this Christ Candle to recognize God's abundant love that blesses us, and blesses extravagantly through us. [Light Candle]

Call to Worship

In the prayers and the praise, in the words and the wonder:

we are given enough joy to live each day.

In the justice for the oppressed, in the unexpected generosity for the lost:

we are given enough compassion to use in service each day.

In the promises made to all, in the mercy offered to each:
we are given enough grace to share each day.

Opening Prayer

Fresh as each morning, you come to us, Holy One, giving us manna for our journey. Not granting us our wildest dreams, but providing us the spiritual nourishment that we need. Servant to the poor, Jesus, you show us that last so we can make them first in our hearts. Spirit of grace, come to us in worship so that: when we grumble you give us reason to be grateful; when we protest, you teach us songs of praise; when we lament, you fill us with holy laughter. Be with us in worship now, and as we worship in everyday living. We pray this along with the prayer Jesus taught, saying...

The Prayer Jesus Taught

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: MV 28 God of the Bible (Fresh as the Morning)

1. God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,
freedom or prison, you are our home.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

2. God in our struggles, God in our hunger,
suffering with us, taking our part,
still you empow'r us, mothering Spirit,
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

3. Those without status, those who are nothing,
you have made royal, gifted with rights,
chosen as partners, midwives of justice,
birthing new systems, lighting new lights.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

4. Not by your finger, not by your anger
will our world order change in a day,
but by your people, fearless and faithful,
small paper lanterns, lighting the way.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,

God always faithful, you do not change.

5. Hope we must carry, shining and certain
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,
bonding us gladly one to the other,
till our world changes facing the Cross.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Bible Readings (Sharon Long)

Psalm 105, Part Four (verses 37-45, adapted from Voices United)

You led Israel out, with spoil of silver and gold.
Among the tribes not one fell behind.
The Egyptians were glad when they went,
For dread of Israel had fallen upon them.

You spread cloud as a screen, and fire as light by night.
The people asked, and you sent them quail,
you fill them with bread from heaven.
You opened a rock and water gushed out:
It flowed like a river through the arid land.

Matthew 20: 1-16

Through this challenging parable of Jesus, we see a glimpse of God's wisdom, God's love, that baffles our sense of justice.

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Let us pray: God of long ago and present day. We come seeking a word for the day; a light for our way and bread for the journey. Fill us with your word so that we can become the people you created us to be. Amen.

Message: *The Kind of Love that Baffles*

(Not available at time of printing.)

Prayer after the Message, written by Bishop Hossam Naoum, Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem:

God of all creation, your love is infinite and embraces all people and all of creation. We cannot fully comprehend the height, depth or width of your divine love.

Though it is beyond measure, we give thanks that your love has captured our hearts enabling us to love all, especially those with whom we disagree and who see us as their enemies.

Inspired by your love, may we seek to be in solidarity with each other, sharing in a common humanity.

Possessed by your love, may our hearts be opened and our fists unclenched; lead us by the Holy Spirit to reach out across the barriers that divide us as neighbours. Triune God, give to your people creative solidarity in common fragility. Amen

Hymn: VU 227 For the Fruit of All Creation

1. For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.
For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.

2. In the just reward of labour, God's will is done.
In the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done.
In our worldwide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

3. For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Offering Moment

Love is baffling. When we think that we don't have any love left in us, God reminds us that there is more in our spiritual tank than we can imagine. Generosity is like that, too. These are anxious times. But have you noticed how, when you are inspired by a cause or a person, it might seem like anything is possible? Even in these uncertain times, you and I, God's children, can actually be influencers in our family and friendship circles, and together we can make a huge difference in our world.

Together, even social distanced, we are called to be God's community. Prayerfully consider what inspires you, and get involved. If you already are involved, if you are contributing as a volunteer, maybe you are giving financially towards St Andrew's ministries – thank you for that! If you're thinking about it, thank you for that! Consider also giving towards our global arm in the United Church, Mission and Service funds witnessing and solidarity work that The World Council of Churches offers in Palestine and Israel. I was sent for 3 months to witness to the courageous work for peace that Palestinians and Israelis do every day – at great risk. Your contributions can make a difference.

Visit our website (www.st-andrews.ca/church) and our Facebook page. You can donate via the Canada Helps button on our website.

God, thank you for your love that transcends our petty human conflicts, helps us to see that love breaks down walls and compels us to seek justice in creative ways. Your love inspires generosity, and we thank you for that, wellspring of hope. Amen.

Offering Hymn:

"Loving and forgiving are you, O Lord; slow to anger, rich in kindness, loving and forgiving are you."

Prayers of the Community

We thank you, the God of this new day, for the invitation you offer, which invites us to be your workers, those whom you call to labour in your name, adding our voices to the cries for justice, opening our hands to serve, giving our hearts away in generous acts of listening and compassion.

Thank you, God of this new day, for inviting us to be your people and to do your work.

We hold in our prayers those who are feeling frustrated by the limitations of this lockdown time, as well as those who are anxious and carrying many burdens, along with those who holding onto deep sadness. We pray that you will make spacious places in our living, allowing us to breathe your healing and strength into our souls.

We pray that you will help us to recognize the bounty and blessings of each day, and to sip deep the cup of gratitude that is placed before our thirsty spirits.

So, come among us God, as a generous landowner, who asks only that we might see the opportunities rather get caught up in the weeds, that we might notice the chances rather than the distractions, and that you will guide our living in big-hearted ways.

Tend to ground beneath our feet. Help us to grow strong as we remember that we are held in your love today. For ourselves, for those we love, and those who have no one to pray for them, we make our prayers..... And on this day of world prayer for peace in Israel and Palestine, we make our prayer. We pray for peace in the land and among the people.

In the healing name of Jesus, hear our prayers, God of this new day, and in your love, answer. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 651 *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*

1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty, hold me with thy powerful hand.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

2. Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

3. When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises, songs of praises I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

Blessing

Now go to be with those forgotten by the world, sharing God's constant love *with absolutely everyone, no exceptions!*

Now let us go to be generous with those near to us and far away, let us share Jesus' radical justice and hope with all who need it.

Now let us go to live as faithful people, joining with the Spirit in solidarity with all who are lonely and afraid. Amen.

Postlude

Lighting the Christ Candle adapted from a prayer by Gord Dunbar. *Gathering*, Pentecost 2, page 32. Used with permission.

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Psalm 105:37-45 adapted from *Voices United: The Hymn and Worship Book of The United Church of Canada*. © 1996 The United Church Publishing House.

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Prayer after the Message courtesy of World Council of Churches, "World Week of Prayer for Peace in Palestine and Israel 2020. <https://www.oikoumene.org/>
