

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
September 6, 2020, 14th After Pentecost

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, September 6th

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

Prelude

PPT: Welcome Slide

Welcome – Brennan Maag

Welcome back to worship after the summer online worship services where leadership was shared between St. Peter's, St. Mark's, and St. Andrew's United Churches. So here we are, you, and the St. Andrew's community, gathered together for virtual worship at least for these next 2 Sundays.

We are gathered by the Source of Life, Source of Community, our God who reminds us in ancient and modern times that no matter what trials and tribulations we face, we are never alone. God is with us.

We would love for you to also join us for Zoom fellowship time. We bring our snacks and beverages to our desks and tables and meet each other on Zoom on Sunday mornings at 11:30. If you would like to connect with some community this Sunday, please wait until this end of this worship video and send an email to Rev Catherine to get your Zoom video link.

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 our weekly newsletter called simply the NEWS by emailing Alison at the church email.

So we are thankful that you are with us, even as we still are in very abnormal times. Here, now, Holy Spirit brings us together from all times and spaces onto this holy ground

Lighting a Memorial Candle for Barb Ritchie

We light this candle as we remember a woman who shone the Christ light for all the world to see. Barbara Kennedy Ritchie was welcomed into the embrace of God on August 18th. She was known in this world as a beloved sister, a life partner to Alan, an aunt, a co-worker, both at the School Board and here at the church, and a friend to many people. Barb lived a life of service in this church community and in the city of Sudbury. We remember her willingness to help, her vision of feeding hungry people through the Out of the Cold Ministry, her strong pastoral care gifts shown in her ability to listen to the needs and stories of others. Today, especially, we remember how much she loved us, how much we loved her, and how she loved God with all her heart and soul and mind and strength.

In John's gospel, we are given this consolation: Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." Peace to those who remember Barb today. Peace in healing and in comfort. Amen.

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

This candle dances with the pieces of the Spirit, reminding us of the warmth of community into which God calls us. We might be separated physically, but the wonder of this flame signifies Spirit and the presence of the living Christ among us. The Holy connects us - one body, one Spirit. We light this candle that shines with wisdom, insight, and clarity for us as we worship. [Light Candle]

Call to Worship

Some of your people gather in sanctuaries
while others create sacred spaces
in their living rooms or back yards.

**Yet, all join to worship you,
God who is with the scattered and gathered.**

Some of your followers are going out to serve and work,
while others stay at home,
helping children and grandchildren learn virtually.

**Yet, all seek to follow your example,
Jesus who calls the scattered and gathered.**

Some care for others by shopping for them,
while some plant seeds of peace and hope.

**Yet, whether gathered or scattered,
all seek to live out your gifts, Spirit of us all.**

Opening Prayer

Let us pray: This strange summer has flown by, God. The days are shorter, the nights cooler. As we open September with this Labour Day worship, we are mindful in pandemic times of all who continue to be on the front lines— workers in shops and restaurants, offices, hospitals, retirement and nursing homes. And a new rhythm is upon us, as schools open, and we are not just a little bit anxious wondering if there will be another wave of COVID. Source of Love, we place ourselves in your hands. Here we go, God, September begins with great uncertainty, but may we find this morning a strength in what our faith and your Word tells us, that we are not alone, that you are with us. This we pray, as we also pray the prayer that Jesus taught...

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.

Time Up Front – Earplugs

Dave comes out wearing earplugs. Someone yells, “Dave! Dave, it’s the time up front!”

Earplugs, do these kind of remind many of you of being on Zoom? You are trying to talk, but the faces on the screen can’t hear you? You are muted, and finally unmute yourself so people can listen. Paul in the Bible reading today talks about everything coming down to love. We can follow all of God’s laws, the 10 Commandments but at the heart of following God, following Jesus is love. Love God above all things, loving your neighbour as you love yourself. Love.

I don’t have to have earplugs on to not listen. Have you had a moment when you were not listening? Your mom or grandpa had to repeat themselves – Julie, are you listening? We all have had times like that. Or a friend is sharing a really heartbreaking story, our listening to them, paying attention to them. That is love. Sometimes that is tough, too. The story might be a hard one. Or they might take a long time to tell their story and you might be thinking, gosh I’d like to play soon.

But staying there, listening. That is showing love. Showing love to that person, but it is also showing love to God.

Hymn: MV 79 Spirit, Open My Heart

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

1. God, replace my stony heart with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear to your grace I now surrender.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

2. Write your love upon my heart as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed, may my living bring you glory.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

3. May I weep with those who weep, share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ, may we welcome one another.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

Bible Readings

Psalm 149, Voices United p. 873

Refrain: All children of Zion, rejoice and give praise.

Sing to God a new song;
give praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel rejoice in its Maker;
let the children of Zion exult in their Sovereign!
Let them praise God's name with dancing;
let them sing God's praise with tambourine and harp!

Refrain: All children of Zion, rejoice and give praise.

For you, O God, take delight in your people;
you crown the humble with victory.
Let the faithful exult in their glory;
let them sing for joy as they feast.

Refrain: All children of Zion, rejoice and give praise.

Let God's praise be on their lips,
the two-edged sword in their hands,
to bring the nations to justice,
and call to account the peoples,
to bind their rulers with fetters,
their great ones with bonds of iron,
to execute on them the sentence decreed.
This is the glory of all God's saints!

Refrain: All children of Zion, rejoice and give praise.

Romans 13: 8-12a

A reading from the letter Paul wrote in ancient and challenging times to his friends in the church in Rome. Listen to his words, with your heart and mind, open to what they might have to say to you today...

Don't run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other. When you love others, you complete what the law has been after all along. The law code—don't sleep with another person's spouse, don't take someone's life, don't take what isn't yours, don't always be wanting what you don't have, and any other "don't" you can think of—finally adds up to this: Love other people as well as you do yourself. You can't go wrong when you love others. When you add up everything in the law code, the sum total is love.

But make sure that you don't get so absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-by-day obligations that you lose track of the time and doze off, oblivious to God. The night is about over, dawn is about to break. Be up and awake to what God is doing!

Response

Just as Paul and the early apostles were guided by your Spirit, O God, to notice you in new and different ways, keep us open to discovering you in and different ways as we hear your Scripture stories. Equip us so we recognize your presence in those we meet and as we journey through this coming week. As disciples of the Way, we pray. Amen.

Message Series: A Special Kind of Love

Part 1 Message: The "Two Feet" of Christian Love

I will be honest. I didn't know a great deal about St. Catherine of Siena. But thanks to this week's reading from Romans, and a commentary that pointed me to Catherine's life, I learned a little bit more about her. ¹

The very modern Bible translation you heard Brennan read this morning is an excerpt from a letter that the apostle Paul wrote to the church. What stuck out for me were his words... *When you love others, you complete what the law has been after all along.* ²

The law he is referring to is the whole of the Ten Commandments. You and I embracing the love Jesus taught us to live fully. To embrace it, to live it, every moment of every day. That love keeps us on track to honour those Commandments.

It sounds simple. But we all know that nothing is that simple. And here is where Catherine of Siena comes in. She grew up in, you're not going to believe this, she was the 24th of 25 children, born into a comfortable family. But her twin died so her parents smothered her a bit. She developed into a tenacious child. She wanted to be in the church all the time, She had these profound mystical experiences of Jesus, That really made her parents more protective, controlling.

Her world was in turmoil too. The Catholic church was splitting at the seams. The Black Plague had gripped the 14th Century world. As she became an adult, her contemplative life fed her soul and stories and images poured out of her. She felt compelled to reach out and care for her world, being with people as they suffered, and often died.

Her one vision of God speaking resonates with me, in the vision God says to her:

*On two feet you must walk my way; on two wings you must fly to heaven.*³

[Raymond of Capua, *Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, 121]

¹ The connection with St. Catherine of Siena came from a commentary on Romans 13 by Eleazar S. Fernan dez. Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary - Year A, Volume 4: Season After Pentecost 2 (Propers 17-Reign of Christ).

² Romans chapter 13, verse 8. *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson

³ Raymond of Capua, *Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, p. 121. © 1960 Harvill Press and P. J. Kenedy & Sons.

One foot grounded in the holy, one foot grounded in this very real world. Balance. As Jesus in the Gospel of Mark is teaching about the commandments and he's asked by an earnest academic: Which is the most important commandment? ...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second... 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴ [Mark 12: 28-31 NRSV]

Balances. Connecting deeply with our Creator, but also caring for our world. Love is at the heart of that balance, but it's not simple. In fact, it is very hard world, isn't it?

This has been quite a summer, hasn't it? I've heard from many of you just how challenging these times are. Others of you have maybe managed better. While we don't have the Plague of Catherine's 14th century time, We have had to adapt to (maybe "cope with" is more accurate?) a wide array of changes in our world. Quarantine at first to our immediate homes and families. For some of us that meant being alone in our apartments. We have been inundated with information on one topic, it seems. Statistics daily, new regimens that we must follow. Even as we were allowed out, there is a new temptation around us to be anxious. And I'm going to be honest, I feel it. My reality is being at home with restless kids. Name your reality, how these times have been challenging.

I am not a contemplative mystic, certainly not a saint, but that image Catherine of Siena offered is striking: Two feet needed to walk, to follow Jesus in our everyday living. If they are not in balance, walking is difficult. Too much of our time spent praying, learning the Bible stories, and we insulate ourselves in hermetically sealed bubble. Bubbles, we have learned are important for keeping us safe, but inside that bubble, we become disconnected, desperate. We see that hunger for connection as we see young adults ignoring the warning of medical authorities, flocking together at beaches. But too much of us in this world is not healthy either. Watch a few hours of news with its 24 hour cycle often bad news, and I am tempted to become jaded, even angry.

I have noticed whenever I have been travelling that people I would call *professional travellers* often seem rootless. People who fight tirelessly for justice, who care for others, without a spiritual practice of some sort, they can burn out. Without roots, we are tossed helplessly in the wind. So, I'm taking stock now, Labour Day weekend, *Are my two figurative Christian feet in good balance?* – connecting with God, caring for my world? How about yours? I want to take Paul's words seriously this month; to keep love of God, myself and my neighbour all in balance. You are here, so it looks like you take your love of God seriously. What practices do you have in place to keep that connection strong? For me I find that in precious quiet moments when I talk to God. How about you? Loving God and being loved extravagantly, I think that those interweave together. Our habits that allow us to listen to what our heart and head say. Reading again Scripture stories that remind us of our child of God-ness – like Jesus tells his listeners not to worry – yeah, right Jesus! But he presses on. Do not get ensnared by life's problems. "Look at the birds of the air;" He says, "they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet [God] feeds them." ⁵

Loving God and ourselves are important. Loving our neighbour, again it sounds simple. But it isn't, is it? It takes paying attention to our spiritual life. Listening to the wisdom of others whom we respect. We are going to talk much more about loving our neighbour this Fall in worship. But for now, let's say out loud, you where you are too, how do we love our neighbours? Here are a handful of my thoughts: Love is caring about others enough to wear a mask; the Love that Jesus and Paul teach is a radical, tough, love, loving someone whom we don't really want to love.

⁴ Mark chapter 12 verses 28-31. *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁵ Matthew chapter 6, verse 26 *New Revised Standard Version*

Maybe something about them rattles us, baffles us, maybe that neighbour evokes in us such a reaction that we need to take a moment, maybe a few moments, go back to step one to experience again, deeply, the love of God so we have the courage to love a neighbour. This is what we were created for – Love. But we need those two feet firmly grounded in God and world. Amen.

Hymn: MV 154 *Deep in Our Hearts*

1. Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.
2. Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.
3. Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.
4. Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Offering Moment

It is so good to be together again, well, sort of. We may still not be together in church, in a building, but we ARE, we at St Andrew's have been Church. Offering ongoing outreach over the summer, providing pizza to clients of Reseau Access downtown. Downtown we witness amazing work offered by agencies, and food has been provided in a distanced way by our partners the Elgin St Mission. There are some challenges ahead, and downtown supports need your prayers and mine.

Paul said, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Sharing our gifts generously is an important way that we express the love that God first planted in us. Love is a gift first from God. The two feet of love – loving God back, but loving our neighbour. Sharing – God's mission flowing through us.

How do you share what you have? Do you take time to connect with God, expressing prayerfully thanks? How do you care for your neighbour? If you already contribute your time, your treasures towards the many ministries of St Andrew's and to the United Church of Canada's Mission & Service – THANK YOU. If you are still thinking about being a part God's work here, may you be blessed in your prayerful pondering. If you have any questions about what we do at St Andrew's or how you can get involved, please call us at 705-674-0721 or email us at church@st-andrews.ca. You might also ask to be added to our weekly Newsletter email list so you can keep up-to-date on how we make a difference, you, all of us.

God, thank you for the privilege of being a part of your mission, that we have ancient heroes like Catherine of Siena who modelled for us how to walk with the two feet of love – loving you...loving our neighbour. Amen.

Offering Hymn: VU 543 *We Give Thee but Thine Own*

We give thee but thine own, whate'er that gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O God, from thee.

Prayers of the Community

God, hear our prayers, and in your love, answer.

We thank you for all the ways your love is filling up the cracks and broken pieces in us this morning. Thank you for the ordinary miracles that touch our living and help us realize how much you care for us, how blessed we are. Thank you for our homes, places to rest and play and make food and simply be still in your love. Thank you for our relationships, for all the ways we see your compassion embodied in the world, especially here, especially now. Thank you for this holy community and for all the ways this church is seeking to be the hands and feet of Christ. Thank you for giving us a mission to love as Jesus loved.

We pray for those whose hearts are heavy. We pray for those who are mourning Barb, other friends, family members. Bring your healing to these sacred memory moments. We pray for those on the streets and those who must live in the park behind our church. Keep our eyes open- don't let us turn away, but help us to find ways to be community, to serve. We thank you especially for the work that Scott and the Place Board are doing to bring community partners together to address the needs all around us. Give them vision to see what might be.

We make our own prayers, longing for your love. During our moments of confusion, we pray. In need of guidance, we pray. For your protection and your love, we pray. To be messengers of the gospel, to be a light in the shadows, to bring hope and carry joy, we pray.

In the name of Jesus, we pray. God, hear our prayers and in your love, answer. Amen.

Closing Hymn: MV 138 *My Love Colours Outside the Lines*

1. My love colours outside the lines, exploring paths that few could ever find;
and takes me into places where I've never been before,
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.

2. My Lord colours outside the lines, turns to wounds to blessings, water into wine;
and takes me into places where I've never been before,
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.

We'll never walk on water if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking from time to time.

And we'll never move the gravestones if we're not prepared to die,
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.

3. My soul longs to colour outside the lines, tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;
I want to walk beyond the boundaries where I've never been before,
throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.

We'll never walk on water if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking from time to time.

And we'll never move the gravestones if we're not prepared to die,
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.

4. My soul longs to colour outside the lines, tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;
I want to walk beyond the boundaries where I've never been before,
throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.

Blessing

Whether gathered in a sanctuary
or scattered wherever we live,
we will take the love of God into the world.

In these uncertain times, we will share the steadfast love of our God.

Whether from familiar places we call home,
or from sacred places we have not visited in a long time,
we will take the grace of Jesus into our neighborhoods.

**For all the lonely, the forgotten, the scared,
we will share the justice and compassion of Jesus.**

Whether on our own, or joining with friends,
whether serving those we know, and especially those we don't,
we will be the people of the Holy Spirit.

**We will open our arms wide,
even from a safe distance,
to welcome all of our sisters and brothers. Amen.**

Postlude

Lighting the Christ Candle written by Peter Chynoweth. *Gathering*, Pentecost 1, page 33. Used with permission.

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Romans 13: 8-12a from *The Message* Translation © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson.

Response to the Readings written by Beth W. Johnston. *Gathering* Pentecost 1, page 45. Used with permission.

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