

WORSHIP AT ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH

February 20, 2022 – 7th Sunday after Epiphany

Welcome to Worship

Join us for a Zoom Virtual Social Hour Sunday at 7:00 p.m.

Email sketchingalong4@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.

Prelude

Hymn: VU 567 *Will You Come and Follow Me, vv. 1, 4, 5*

1. Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?
4. Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?
5. Christ, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Inviting Holy Light

We prepare our bodies and minds for worship. [silence] We can do many things to prepare – meditation, prayer, listening to quiet music. Whatever you do, feel. Feel your feet, your body supported from below. Breathe deeply. Feel the cleansing of life-giving oxygen that breathes life into you. We give thanks for Creation, for Life. As we invite holy light, we recognize that we are interwoven in this wondrous universe – created, of value, interdependent with all creation. In wonder and gratitude. [*light candle*]

Nurturing Safe Space

We are all children of Creator God. This is space created in the name of Jesus, the one who unconditionally welcomed all people into God's abundance. Spirit, create in us that radical community where every neighbour experience love and welcome.

Acknowledging Traditional Territory

Lands that have sustained countless peoples from time immemorial to the present. We gather as a people of faith seeking to find ways to live with justice and respect with all those who call these lands home, we are called to honour the land, to live with respect in creation...to love and seek justice for all peoples. To that end, we acknowledge gratefully that here we worship on the traditional territories of the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. We recognize the long history of our First Nations and Métis peoples. Let us, all of us, Treaty people, commit ourselves anew to the work of healing, justice, and reconciliation.

Call to Worship

We come, those who seek to trust in God.

We commit ourselves to love others as Jesus teaches us.

We come, delighting in all the wonders God provides for us.

**When the world stresses us out, we try not to worry,
instead opening ourselves to God's heart.**

We come, waiting patiently for God to speak.
**In worship and in everyday living, we seek to be still,
listening for God's words of hope, of peace.**

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me:

Come closer to us, O God, reconcile us to our brothers and sisters.

Come closer to us, O God, care for our ageing generations.

Come closer to us, O God, forgive us for our wrongdoing.

Come closer to us, O God, protect us from our future famine.

Come closer to us, O God, draw us nearer to each other through you.

Embrace with us, weep with us, that we may be family again.

The Prayer Jesus Taught

We pray this along with the prayer we were 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.

Welcome & Announcements

Welcome to worship, whether you are joining us for the first time in awhile in the sanctuary observing all the usual COVID precautions – masks at all times, no singing or socializing, and sitting within our bubbles. Welcome to you joining us online, connected as a Body of Christ by the wonder of technology, as if connected by veins and arteries.

I want to offer a special invitation to you to join our virtual walk for Coldest Night of the Year this coming week. We are online under Sudbury Area Faith Communities, you can make a donation or if you want to join the walk to help the Samaritan Centre, contact me and I will sign you up. I will be actually doing a walk on the 26th at 4pm starting at the front doors of St. Andrew's United Church at 111 Larch Street. Whether virtually or physically walking, we will hold in prayer all the important downtown agencies, staff, volunteers, and those who face homelessness, poverty and addictions.

We are so blessed today in worship to again have the musical leadership of Debby and Graham. Thank you for your gifts today. Debby Laporte will have a double role today, reading the Scriptures. We have a creative twist woven into the Gospel reading today, thank you Debby, Suzanne and Jen for your involvement.

We also have a Virtual Social Hour tonight at 7 with hosts Bev and Diane. You can get your Zoom link to join that time of connecting by sending an email to Diane. That email address will be part of the credits after this worship.

Hymn: VU 766 *As the Deer Pants for the Water, vs. 1*

1. As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you;
you alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.
You alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield;
you alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you.

Prayer for Grace

Over and over we are told how simple life with God can be: trust, do good to others, take delight in the wonders God provides for us. But we simply have trouble living such a life. We seek God's Grace, God's unconditional love and forgiveness as we struggle to find mercy and forgiveness in us when we are hurt, confused, angry.

This is a season after Epiphany, stories of how God is revealed to us in strange and challenging times. When we are angry, worried, even feeling the niggings of hate in us, how challenging the words of Jesus – Love your enemy.

Question: Can you think of a person who makes you so angry when you just think of them? How do you take little “baby steps” towards finding love for them? [silence]

Words of Assurance

There is good news, my friends. Salvation, Restoration, comes only from God and we cannot earn that. It is a gift, freely offered to us. There isn't much in this world that free, especially as valuable as love. In our Creator comes love, healing, and hope. Accept forgiveness, and may we seek to offer heartfelt, love and forgiveness to others. God provides healing and hope to all. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven! Amen.

Hymn: VU 766 As the Deer Pants for the Water, vs. 2

2. I want you more than gold or silver, only you can satisfy;
you alone are the real joy-giver and the apple of my eye.
You alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield;
you alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you.

Scripture Readings (Debby Laporte)

Psalm 37 assorted verses (Contemporary English Version)

Don't be annoyed by anyone who does wrong, and don't envy them.
They will soon disappear like grass without rain...

Let the Lord lead you and trust [the Lord] to help.
Then it will be as clear as the noonday sun that you were right.

Be patient and trust the Lord.
Don't let it bother you when all goes well for those
who do sinful things.
Don't be angry or furious.
Anger can lead to sin...

The Lord helps them and saves them because they run to the Lord

Luke 6:17-26 (Adapted from New Revised Standard Version)

Debby: “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

Sue: (*scoffing*) What! Are you kidding me??

Debby: Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

Sue: Have you seen how polarized things are? Do to them before they do to ME!

Debby: If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt.

Sue shakes her head as Debby reads on.

Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.

Sue: (*standing up for dramatic impact*) Ok, Jesus. I appreciate this idea of peace and love. I care about my neighbour, I think most of us do, except for him over there. (*Points to someone like Ralph or Roger*). He doesn't, and God help him. My point is, of course, we have to love, and be generous. But to show compassion for the bullies?? That will only motivate them to hurt us more.

Debby: Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

Jen: (*stands up*) Jesus pushes us to grow, spiritually. To hear these stories and instructions with new ears, is a call to delve into our own vulnerability, to see our mutual need for forgiveness, healing, and restoration. The imperatives of this Sermon on the Plain set high standards, but Jesus is not asking us to be perfect on our own. Our holiness can't be achieved alone, but only as we are merciful with one another. Holiness, as God has created as our birthright, is wholeness.

Debby: Let us pray. Come close to us, O God. Reconcile us to our brothers and sisters. Come closer to us, O God, so we may be more merciful and holy in your image. Amen.

Message: "Are You Still Listening?"

Message will be posted on the website when it becomes available.

Questions for Quiet Reflection

These are challenging teachings from Jesus to follow in everyday life!

- What daily practices can help me to be more Christ-like?
- How might I nurture compassion in myself for people that I feel tempted to judge?

Hymn: VU 593 Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love, vv. 2, 4

Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love, show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.

2. Neighbours are rich and poor,
varied in colour and race,
neighbours are near and far away.

Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love, show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.

4. Kneel at the feet of our friends,
silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you.

Jesu, Jesu,
fill us with your love, show us how to serve
the neighbours we have from you.

Invitation to Offering

Our gifts are many and varied, depending on the gifts God first gave us. We give locally, our volunteering and our treasures to bless the ministries of St. Andrew's. We give globally, towards ministries in Canada and around the world, through the United Church's Mission and Service. Thank you for all you do, your generosity and joy in giving.

Dedication Hymn: VU 539 *God of All Good, vs. 1*

1. God of all good, our gifts we bring to you,
use them your holy purpose to fulfil;
tokens of love and pledges brought anew
that our whole life is offered to your will.

Prayer of Dedication

You pour out grace upon us, Loving God, not so we might be filled, but we might empty ourselves for others. Take these gifts we offer in these moments and use them to bring new life and hope to all around us. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers of the Community

God who makes us one with each other, one with creation, one with humanity, one with divinity, we pray that we may be seekers and doers of mercy. Dwell in our vulnerability and intensify our compassion until we feel connected, reconciled, and whole. We pray for those near and far who have asked us to pray for them. For those worried about the future (pause). For those traumatized by the past (pause). For those responsible for the present (pause).

Grant us all a vision of ourselves cast in your eternal love, that we may live, die, and love as one world without end. Amen.

To add someone or a concern to the Prayer List, please contact Sue Nykilchyk at 705-919-9896 or crazycat@cyberbeach.net

Closing Hymn: MV 169 *When Hands Reach Out*

1. When hands reach out beyond divides and hope is truly found,
each chain of hate will fall away and bells of peace shall sound,
and bells of peace, of peace shall sound, and bells of peace shall sound,
each chain of hate will fall away and bells of peace shall sound.

2. When fear no longer guides our steps and days of war are done,
God's dream for all shall live anew; our hearts will heal as one,
our hearts will heal, will heal as one, our hearts will heal as one,
God's dream for all shall live anew; our hearts will heal as one.

3. When race and creed blind us no more, a neighbour's face we'll see,
and we shall dance the whole world round, for love will set us free,
for love, yes love will set us free, for love will set us free,
and we shall dance the whole world round, for love will set us free.

Blessing

We leave, our hearts filled with God's love.

**We will go to offer the wonders of laughter
and hope to everyone we will meet.**

We leave, following Jesus into the world.

**We will serve alongside him in the brokenness
of our neighbors and our communities.**

We leave, having heard the whispers of the Spirit.

**We will speak justice to those
who would hoard it only for themselves.**

Benediction Hymn: VU 424 *May the God of Hope, vs. 2*

2. May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

Call to Worship, adaptation of **Prayer for Grace**, and **Prayer of Dedication** © Thom M. Shuman
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Opening Prayer, Prayer response to Scripture, Prayers of Community and **Blessing Prayer**
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Luke 6:17-26 adapted from *New Revised Standard Version Bible*. © 1989 the Division of Christian
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