

**ZOOM Worship for August 22, 2021
13th Sunday after Pentecost**

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Announcements

Centering Music: "Lord Listen to Your Children Praying" VU 400

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace

Call to Worship:

One: Into this world of hope and horror, God comes.
Two: Into this community of welcome and worry, God comes.
One: Into this congregation of the faithful and fatigued, God comes
Two: And we come to meet you, O God.
One: By your Spirit, O God, strengthen our hope, our welcome and our faith.

Opening Prayer:

One: Loving and merciful God, your purposes are beyond our human understanding,
Two: your presence both comforts and confounds us.
One: We seek your help to be open to all that you intend for us this day,
Two to respond to your will with our whole selves,
One: that we might find our rightful place in the work of your blessed enterprise
Two: and live out the mission you have for us.
One: We ask this in Jesus' name. And now pray together,

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

Opening Hymn: "Here, O God, Your Servants Gather" VU 362

Here, O God, your servants gather, hand we link with hand;
looking to our Saviour's cross, joined in love we stand.
As we seek the realm of God, we unite to pray:
Jesus, Saviour, guide our steps, for you are the Way.

Many are the tongues we speak, scattered are the lands,
yet our hearts are one in God, one in love's demands.
Even in darkness hope appears, calling age and youth:
Jesus, teacher, dwell with us, for you are the Truth.

Nature's secrets open wide, changes never cease;
where, O where, can weary souls find the source of peace?
Unto all those sore distressed, torn by endless strife:
Jesus, healer, bring your balm, for you are the Life.

Grant, O God, an age renewed, filled with deathless love;
help us as we work and pray, send us from above
truth and courage, faith and power needed in our strife:
Jesus, Saviour, be our Way, be our Truth, our Life.

Scripture readings:

Mark 1: 35

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

Matthew 14: 22-23a

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

Matthew 6: 7 - 9

'When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 'Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

All: Thanks be to God.

Music for meditation: "Look To The Light" (Pat Mayberry, Arr. David Kai)

Reflection: "Prayer"

Hymn: "What A Friend We Have in Jesus" VU 664

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry

everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Christ the Saviour is our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do our friends despise, forsake us?
Are we tempted to despair?
Jesus' strength will shield our weakness,
and we'll find new courage there.

Offering Invitation:

One: We are living, breathing messages of God's love for the world.

Two: This is our work of faith and our labour of love and our steadfastness of hope in Jesus Christ.

One: Like the earliest Christians we are here because of the commitment and faith and generosity of others who shared the good news of the gospel in their time.

Two: So we turn now, in our time, and share our faith and our commitment through generous giving to support the ministry of Applewood United and the United Church of Canada through the Mission and Service Fund in Christ's name.

Prayer of Dedication: Tabitha Carey, Dorchester, Ontario

One: Lord, you have called us to join you as co-workers and co-heirs of the Kingdom.

Two: We take this opportunity to demonstrate our allegiance to you.

One: You are the Lord of our families, our finances, and our future.

Two: May we give our offerings with a heart of thanksgiving.

One: We dedicate these gifts to be used to bring hope and healing to the world. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Closing Hymn: "Blest Be The Tie That Binds" VU 602

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the unity of heart and mind
is like to that above.

Before our Maker's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share each other's woes,
each other's burdens bear;
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

This glorious hope revives
our courage on the way;
that we shall live in perfect love
in God's eternal day.

Commissioning: Kate Crawford, Grand Bend, Ontario

One: Arise friends and as we go may we be conscious to:

Two: Give our hearts to the One who made them.

One: Give our spirits to the One who delights in them.

Two: Give our souls to the One who strengthens them,

One: and follow in the way of Jesus Christ, this day and every day. Amen.

Choral Benediction: "This Place"

Reflection

PRAYER

(Scripture: Mark 1: 35, Matthew 14: 22-23a, Matthew 6: 7 – 9)

Ten year old Robert did not do his homework and so he struggled through his geography test. He did a lot of guessing. That evening his mind went back to the test and he was deeply troubled.

What if too many of his answers were wrong? What if he failed? That night he said his prayers and added a nervous postscript, "Please dear God, make Paris the capital of Sweden."

The highest activity of which the human spirit is capable of is dialoguing with God. Prayer puts us in touch with and allows us to interact with the creator of the universe.

Genuine prayer in the scriptures is not a natural response. A person prays because God has already reached out and touched a person's spirit calling them to pray, to call home.

You do not need to define prayer nor have a complete understanding of what prayer is in order to pray. But thinking clearly about prayer is important as we seek to improve our prayer lives.

Prayer was a very important part of Jesus' life. The Gospels contain many references to Jesus praying and we read in the Gospels and Hebrews of Jesus pouring out his prayers to God.

Prayer is much more than ritual and occasional crisis-based deal making. Prayer is being in communication with God. Prayer is communication because it involves giving and receiving. It is sharing between two beings – God and a believer.

God's invitation to pray is an invitation to an intimate relationship. Prayer is the currency of that friendship. It is a free and natural conversation between two beings. But it is more than that.

On a walking pilgrimage to Assisi in Italy, writer and educator Patricia Hampl, began to make a list in answer to the question, "What is prayer?" She wrote down: praise, gratitude, begging/pleading/cutting deals, fruitless whining and pulling focus.

Then she broke off her list for she discovered prayer only seems like an act of language. "Fundamentally, it is a position, a placement of oneself, a habit of attention."

At times I find myself silently singing a hymn of praise which takes me by surprise as it seems to arise out of the blue.

"Be still and know that I am God." Stop playing God for a while and let God be God. You and I know our tendency to try to live without God. We must seek God's help at times to overcome the inertia that prevents relationship. We bond through extensive and ongoing contact.

- Story of a Japanese Christian thoughts on prayer
- Jenny – More than Enough?

Prayer is not always talking. It is sitting in stillness and silence and listening. The Holy Spirit speaks through words of scripture, song, another person, through impressions, reflections, sometimes an inner voice.

The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, commented on prayer, "A man prayed and at first he thought that prayer was talking but he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is listening."

Life doesn't go on as usual after we pray. Changes occur. Like Peter we may pray for food and get a lesson in racism. Like Paul we may pray for healing and get a lesson on humility.

Prayer is not a means of removing the unknown and unpredictable elements in life but rather a way of including the unknown and unpredictable in the outworking of the grace of God in our lives.

We may yearn for God's Old Testament style of power politics but when Jesus left his disciples he told them that the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, was coming to take his place amongst them. If you have been to a counsellor you know how they work. A good counsellor works with you on your interior bringing dormant health to the surface.

Prayer is cooperation with God. A consent that opens the way for grace to work.

Christian author, Philip Yancey writes, most of the time the Counsellor -the Holy Spirit, communicates subtly: feeding ideas into my mind, bringing to awareness a caustic comment I just made, inspiring to choose better, shedding light on hidden dangers, sensitizing me to the needs of another. God's Spirit whispers rather than shouts and brings peace not turmoil.

Story – The Opposite of Indifference

Story – Rev. Lee Van Ham, Presbyterian Minister

The real value of persistent prayer is not about getting what we want as that we become the person we should be. Prayer changes us.

To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to change us. If we are unwilling to change we will not be interested in prayer. The closer we come to God the more we see our need to change and the more we desire to be Christ-like.

August 22, 2021
Rev. Dale Burkart