

Worship at Home for August 23 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:  
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer

Holy Centre, draw us into your peace and goodness.

Holy Source, inspire us to see the gifts you have given us.

Holy Other, entice us to contemplate transformation.

Amen

Opening Music: "Lord Prepare Me to be a Sanctuary"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W\\_XxCh2b30](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W_XxCh2b30)

Opening Prayer: Prayer of adoration — Louise Gough, UK from the website *Worship Words*

Loving God

who conceived life,

originates ingenuity,

embraces individuality,

welcomes everyone,

celebrates diversity,

encourages unity,

offers serenity,

gifts simplicity,

lavishes compassion,

we worship you!

Living Jesus

who breathes our air,

walks our streets,

feels our pain,

sheds tears,

enjoys company,

bubbles with laughter,  
holds our hands,  
we worship you!

Gentle Spirit  
who strengthens fragile spirits,  
shelters the suffering,  
respires life and hope,  
transforms all sorrow,  
binds broken hearts,  
sets captives free,  
we worship you!

Beautiful Trinity of Love,  
for your presence in our lives,  
for your comfort and company,  
for shaking us out of tired routines,  
and calling us ever to follow you  
then, blessing our journey with unexpected discoveries,  
expanding our horizons,  
tendering endless encouragement  
and traveling with us,  
we worship you! Amen.

#### Scripture Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

#### Reflection

These are familiar words to many of us, from Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Even if we have not read or heard this passage previously, we have likely heard that we should engage in faith and work 'whole-heartedly, with our whole beings, or that we should not think too highly of ourselves! We do not know what conflict in the church communities in Rome sparked Paul's

writing, but we do know he continues the theme and imagery of the body with many parts when he writes to the church in Corinth.

Less familiar may be the concept of sacrifice in Paul's context. Animals whose lives were offered as sacrifice were part of an act of worship, of honouring God in his Jewish tradition. Sacrifice did not have a negative connotation, or a sense of giving up or loss, but rather a sharing and often an act of thanksgiving. So to offer a continued *living* sacrifice was something new – an idea that we ourselves can be gifts to offer to God, that our lives and our actions could be dedicated to the Holy Source – and the result can be transformational.

There are many 'snippets' that occur to me from this passage that often stay in my mind:

"do not be conformed to this world"

"be transformed by the renewing of your minds"

"we are members one of another"

"have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us"

As we continue to live with restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these short passages seem particularly relevant and/or poignant to me. I believe we are still called not to be 'conformed' to this world even though the 'rules' that keep us safe and healthy need to be followed. The pandemic has shown us some of the chinks in armour of our society: inadequate care for our elder or infirm; systemic racism in policing, government, and education and all aspects of our living; the widening gap between those who have power and those who need power – just to name a few. Finding new ways to stand against what has hitherto been 'accepted' in these issues is to discern God's will and way for us personally and as a community of faith.

For many folk I've spoken with, despite loneliness, isolation and 'unease', this stay-at-home time has been an opportunity to 'renew minds' in some way. An increase in gratitude and appreciation for 'simple' aspects of life was mentioned by some, others have had time for contemplation on the importance of family and relationships, and some found joy in being able to use their physical bodies to buy groceries or do other errands for the vulnerable – offering their own living sacrifice to others. We have been reading more, some of us writing more, all of us can be open to letting God's powerful love transform us.

It has also been important for me to be reminded that we are indeed 'members of one another' even though we cannot be together physically. We need the gifts of those who sit on our Gathering Team, and those who create and share our weekly Applelog. We need folks who are good with numbers, and folks who can create and summarize a survey. We need those who offer care by making a call others in our community, or delivering Worship at Home, or just delivering their presence through emails or other communication. We need each other. The challenges of a world changed by the COVID-19 pandemic will be with us for some time, and we cannot know the full extent of how our lives will continue to be shaped by this virus. What we can know is that God still calls us to live, to love, to care, to create, to be transformed and offer the space in our hearts and minds to contemplate the transformation of our world.

Thanks be to God for abiding love to fill us, for scripture to enlighten and comfort us, for the life of Jesus to inspire and teach us, and for the breath of the Spirit to move us. Amen

*Are there points in this passage that speak to you? Do you have other scripture 'bits' that stay in your hearts and minds – to inspire or help?*

Music: 'Doc' McKenzie "I'm Gonna Live so God Can Use me"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLOkWrwFCJ4>

### Prayers of the People

Compassionate and Creating God,  
as we notice the summer days growing shorter,  
we are reminded of your circle of life – of flowers that bloom and then die,  
of times of growth and times stillness, of the sun that constantly changes its position in the sky  
marking days and seasons.

We thank you, God, that you create within us and within your creation that ability to adapt to  
change, to see opportunity in the new, and the resilience to continue.

We thank you for our community, Applewood United Church, and for communities of faith in all  
parts of this world who are adapting and changing and finding new ways to be your people and  
declare their faith and your love in the world.

We pray today God, with hope and joy, for Jonathan Yee and his fiancé Nau Nau as they  
celebrate their marriage and enter into that transformed and transformational relationship.

We remember, God that change is also hard – we yearn for what has been, we wonder what will  
come. We pray God, for those who are stressed and worried about the changes around us,  
thinking of parents and youth and children facing a return to school, shop keepers and  
restaurant owners still feeling the effects of pandemic-induced changes to their livelihoods,  
performers and those in the entertainment world who have still not been able to return to work  
and are seeking new ways to connect with their audiences.

We pray, God, for those who are dealing with changes to their physical and mental health, those  
who are experiencing changes to their income levels or housing security.

We pray for those who are working to bring change to policing, to systems of justice, to ALL of  
systems, to ensure that Black lives, Indigenous lives, racialized lives, matter.

We pray, God, with our hearts open, our spirits tuned to your Spirit, and our minds actively  
working through the changes around us –

Amen

Closing music: "Love Divine, all loves excelling"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gvCODgV1fc>

### **Blessing**

Go into your day following God's call with your whole selves –  
body, mind and spirit ready to act and ready to be transformed.

Go into the spaces where you are safe and comfortable  
knowing that God blesses you – and each one.

Go in God's light, Christ's companionship, and the Spirit's light.

Amen