

ZOOM Worship for July 4, 2021
6th 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: "You Are Holy Holy" MV 45

You are holy, you show us the way.

You show us, you show us, you show us the way.

Call to Worship:

- Susan Lukey, High River, Alta.

One: Jesus became the talk of the town and was highly criticized

Two: when he ate with those considered unclean and unacceptable.

One: The apostle Paul was challenged and criticized

Two: when he visited those considered unclean and unacceptable.

One: Acceptance, generosity, healing, forgiveness:

Two: those are the words that defined what Jesus was all about.

One: Acceptance, generosity, healing, forgiveness:

Two: the early church shaped their life together around those spiritual practices as well.

One: Acceptance, generosity, healing, forgiveness:

Two: may these words define our life together as a congregation and the way that each of us lives and works in this world.

One: Come, let us worship God, who strengthens these gifts within us!

Opening Prayer:

One: God of justice and generosity, help us to excel in faith and wisdom, in words and action.

Two: Guide us as your stewards, that we may eagerly share the many gifts you have given us.

One: Help us to recognize the abundance of our lives,

Two: that we may share that abundance freely and lovingly. With gratitude we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: (spoken)

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: “Deep in Our Hearts” MV 154

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.

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.

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 common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.

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.

Scripture reading:

2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 15

Encouragement to Be Generous

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that

their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, 'The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.'

Special Music: "O God, We Worship You" (Victor C. Johnson)

Reflection: "Excel in Generosity"

Hymn: "Let Us Build a Space (House)" MV 1 vs 1,4,5

Let us build a space where love can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this space.

Let us build a space where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this space.

Let us build a space where all are named,
their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured,
taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace;
Let this space proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this space.

Offering Invitation

One: Let us pause to give thanks to God for life, faith and community. Let us give thanks to God for what has been offered to support God's work in our world through Applewood United Church.

Prayer of Dedication:

- Gord Dunbar, Kincardine, Ont.

One: Take what we offer this morning, O God:

Two: Take our caring for our neighbours from a distance; take our phone and zoom calls, texts and social media greetings; take our action of staying at home and physical distancing; take all we offer this morning in word, in action, and in financial donations,

One: blessing us and our giving in Jesus' name. Amen

Prayers of the People

Closing Hymn: "What Can I Do?" MV 191

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

Commissioning:

- Julie Hutton, Minnedosa, Man.

One: Go from this time together filled with God's abundant love.

Two: Go from this time together and share this abundance and love with others.
One: As we separate may you know that God is grateful for each and every one of you.
Two: Go with peace. Go with grace. Amen.

Closing Music: "You Are Holy Holy" *Reprise* MV 45
You are holy, you show us the way.
You show us, you show us, you show us the way.

Reflection

"EXCEL IN GENEROSITY" (Scripture: 2 Corinthians 8: 1 - 15)

The apostle Paul calls on the followers of Jesus Christ found in the city of Corinth, Greece and at the same time it is a call to us, to follow the lead of the Macedonians (churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) and excel in generosity and caring. The only connection these distanced groups of people shared was their belief in Jesus Christ and ties to Paul and his companions in ministry.

Paul attributes the Macedonians generosity to the fact that they had given themselves unreservedly to God and God's messengers. Evidently they were trying to emulate the generosity of Jesus Christ which Paul so eloquently describes in verse 9, **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."** Jesus gave deeply of himself to humankind.

A right response to this abundant generosity to us is to be generous.
It is a challenge for us to be generous. We seem predisposed to wanting to control our time and use our talents and resources for ourselves.

Author E.B. White writes, "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day." Since we believe it is God's world, both are important to God and us.

There are people who seem naturally disposed to be generous giving people. Maybe it is in their DNA or they have been raised that way. The Christians in Macedonia are not unique as you often find the most giving and joyful people in areas lacking in wealth. It is often in places like that you will discover people who are rich in spirit and grateful for what they have while poor in terms of financial means.

Without gratitude and generosity, our enjoyment of the world shrinks into cramped self-indulgence and the unscratchable itch of never having enough. And without gratitude, our efforts to improve the world degenerate into whining self-pity, anger, and frustration over the burden of our supposed moral superiority that others refuse to acknowledge. (Rev. Ted Loder)

We have to relearn time and time again that everything we share with others and possess is only for a time. With the exception of God everything else has a limited shelf life. Clinging is of limited value.

Writer Nancy Mairs puts clinging into perspective. "Thanks to multiple sclerosis, one thing after another has been wrenched from my life—dancing, driving, walking, working—and I have learned neither to

yearn after them nor to dread further deprivation, but to attend to what I have.”

Now here is something to cling to. Paul writes, **“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

The love and care of God for us frees us to be generous. We dare not give in to the siren calls of cowardice and greed and hate and fear. Ours is to strive to heal wounds, to lift the despairing all around us. Ours is to join with God in creating beauty where there is ugliness, peace where there is hostility, freedom where there is oppression, new life where there are dead ends, and to be generous and caring in our giving.

July 4, 2021

Rev. Dale Burkart