

ZOOM Worship for June 13, 2021
3rd 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: "Where Two or Three Are Gathered" MV 14

Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there, I am there.

Call to Worship:

- One: If you are carrying the stresses and strains of living in a complex world, if you feel at times like God has abandoned you,
Two: find the heartbeat of God in our gathering within divine mystery.
One: If you are puzzled by the choices your neighbours or family members make, if you are wondering how to make your own choices with so many options,
Two: come and discover the voice of Christ speaking to our hearts of wholeness.
One: Come to commune with God within us, God beyond us,
Two: and God among us, reaching into restorative relationship with the Holy One in prayer:

Opening Prayer:

- One: Powerful Spirit, who breathes us into freedom and insight, guide us on the El Camino [the Way] of Jesus that we find zeal for faithfulness;
Two: enflame our trust in you that we become proclaimers of good news; and strengthen us for the challenge of your call and the price of loving. Amen. And let us now join in singing:
(Gord Dunbar, Kincardine, ON)

The Lord's Prayer: (sung) VU 959

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: "Seek Ye First" VU 356

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
and God's righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.
Hallelu, hallelujah.

Ask and it shall be given unto you;
seek and you shall find;
knock and the door shall be opened unto you.
Hallelu, hallelujah.

We do not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of God.
Hallelu, hallelujah.

Scripture reading:

2 Corinthians 4: 1 – 10, 16 – 5: 1

Treasure in Clay Jars

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.

Living by Faith

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.
Two: Thanks be to God.

Choir: "We are a Rainbow" (David Kai)

Reflection: "God Modifies All Situations"

Hymn: "There is a Balm in Gilead" VU 612

There is a balm in Gilead
to make the wounded whole.
There is a balm in Gilead
to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged,
and think my work's in vain,
but then the Holy Spirit
revives my soul again. R

If you cannot preach like Peter,
if you cannot pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Jesus
and say, 'He died for all.' R

Offering Invitation

Prayer of Dedication:

One: Take what we offer this morning, O God:
Two: Take our caring for our neighbours from a distance;
One: take our phone calls, texts, and social media greetings with our families;
Two: take our action of staying home and physical distancing;
One: take all we offer this morning in word, in action,
Two: and in donation, blessing us and our giving in Jesus' name. Amen.
(Gord Dunbar)

Prayers of the People

Closing Hymn: "You Shall Go Out With Joy" VU 884

You shall go out with joy
and be led forth with peace;
the mountains and the hills
will break forth before you;
there'll be shouts of joy,
and all the trees of the field
will clap, will clap their hands!

And all the trees of the field will clap their hands,
(clap, clap)

the trees of the field will clap their hands,
(clap, clap)
the trees of the field will clap their hands
(clap, clap)
while you go out with joy.

Commissioning/Blessing:

One: God blesses us in so many ways.

Two: As God's beloved, we know God's love, we follow Christ's way, and we are sustained by the Holy Spirit's persistence.

One: Now go into the world extravagantly scattering God's seeds of love. Amen.

Two: Amen.

(Sheryl McLeod, Admaston, ON)

Reflection

"GOD MODIFIES ALL SITUATIONS"

(Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4: 1 – 10, 4: 16 – 5: 1)

Reading or hearing of people doing terrible things in the name of religion upsets me. Rightly or wrongly I hold people who acknowledge the existence and presence of God in whatever religion to a higher standard than people who don't believe in God.

I find though that even when that happens I do not remain in a state of despair as I become aware of God's presence and the good things that God is doing in our world through people like you.

I can be down but not out thanks to God.

Dr. Barry Rieder, the United Church's Community Minister in the Jane/ Finch community for the past 13 years, said to me after a shooting in the community, "I felt like hanging up my spurs."

Barry has experienced many shooting deaths and officiated at some of the memorial services but at times when a person cannot perceive an end to the problem it can become too much.

But thanks be to God, Barry was down but not out.

An African-American spiritual describes this condition this way. **"Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again."**

We are containers, clay jars, of the good news of God at work. We may lose heart for a time but since God is part of the equation, we get a "second wind." An interesting expression since wind is the image associated with the Holy Spirit.

We commend God's good news to every person's conscience. We do not promote ourselves but Jesus Christ who is able to modify people and situations.

Life like Paul says is full of struggle and trouble. Everyone is struggling with some anxiety or agony, some misery of mind, physical pain, the suffering of sharing in someone else's suffering. The degree of struggle does vary from person to person but it is still there in some form with everyone.

Our culture promotes that we have a right to an untroubled and comfortable existence. It often tries to deny pain.

Pain and discipline are required to learn and grow. They are also part of living in relationship. To love deeply is to hurt at times. Margaret Atwood has written, **"To see the world clearly is to see it through tears. Then why ask me what is wrong with my eyes?"**

A grade 2 student interrupted his teacher with, "Can we hurry up? This is boring." The girl sitting next to him whispered, "Shut up! It's supposed to be boring."

Life and death, pain and purpose, suffering and joy, letting go and receiving are not far apart. Life even now is one death and resurrection after another. It's the way of real life.

The apostle Paul puts it this way, **"Outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."**

Grace can be found even in the worst moments of our lives. Examples abound. Fanny Crosby was blinded at less than one year of age due to improper medical treatment. Crosby has blessed us with over 8000 hymns. Joseph Scriven lost his 19 year old fiancée to drowning but out of his sorrow came "What a Friend We Have In Jesus" which has ministered to countless people. It was grace that caused slave trading ship Captain John Newton to fear and change his career path becoming an Anglican priest and writer of Amazing Grace.

Dr. Jane Poulson, blinded by diabetes at 27 and about to graduate from McGill medical school, pushed herself to become Canada's first practicing blind physician. Cancer and heart disease came along which led to Dr. Poulson's death at the Grace Hospital, Toronto in 2001 at 49 years of age. But before that she helped many with the things her affliction and hard-earned faith taught her. Her autobiography **"The Doctor Will Not See You Now"** is filled with great wisdom on living life, confronting challenges and preparing to die.. The book ends quoting Psalm 139: 18. **"I come to the end—I am still with you."**

Poet and author Ann Weems writes, "On August 14, 1982, the stars fell from my sky. My son, my Todd, had been killed less than an hour after his twenty-first birthday. August 14, 1982 . . . and still I weep." In her book of 50 **Psalms of Lament** she gives voice to the grief and anguish she feels over the death of her son. In the preface to her Laments these two poems can be found:

Contemporary song writer Andre Crouch sums it all up in his song "Through It All." In the song these words are repeated **"Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God."**

With God we are never alone. Hurt and handicaps do not have to stymie us but can be used to contribute, minister and create. God will lift us up and as a result others will be blessed.

A woman sold flowers on the same street corner for years. She struck people passing by as a happy person. When asked how she was her reply was "Everything is good." If questioned further she would say, "You can't reach my age and not have problems." But then she would add, "Only it's like Jesus and Good Friday. Worst day for the world. When I get troubles and I remember that, and then I think of what happened only 3 days later. So when things go wrong, I've learned to wait 3 days and somehow things always get better."

God can modify all situations. Thanks be to God.

June 13, 2021

Rev. Dale Burkart