

**Zoom Worship for, October 31, 2021  
All Saints Eve/Reformation Sunday**

**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.

**Centering Music: "You Are Holy" MV 45**

You are holy, you show us the way. (4x)

You show us, you show us, you show us the way. (4x)

**Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: From age to age, God has called the people to gather -

Two: *in fields and cathedrals, in villages and cities,*

One: with our neighbours and our families,

Two: *with our friends and with strangers.*

One: In this age, God calls us together

Two: *to acknowledge our faith story,*

One: to remember those who were willing to reform and be reformed.

Two: *God calls us to worship*

One: God calls us to praise.

Two: *God calls us to prayer.*

One: Most gracious God,  
we pray for your Church throughout the world.

Fill it with all truth,

and with all peace.

Where it is corrupt, purge it;

where it is in error, direct it;

where anything is amiss, reform it;

where it is right, strengthen and confirm it;

where it is in want, furnish it;

where it is divided and torn, mend it,

O Holy One of Israel. Amen.

*William Laud 1573-1645*

**Opening Hymn: "God of the Bible" MV 28 vs 1,3,4**

God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,

hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,

you are our centre, daylight or darkness,

freedom or prison, you are our home.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
 God always faithful you do not change.  
 Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
 God always faithful, you do not change.

Those without status, those you are nothing,  
 you have made royal, gifted with rights,  
 chosen as partners, midwives of justice,  
 birthing new systems, lighting new lights.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
 God always faithful you do not change.  
 Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
 God always faithful, you do not change.

Not by your finger, not by your anger  
 will our world order change in a day,  
 but by your people, fearless and faithful,  
 small paper lanterns, lighting the way.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
 God always faithful you do not change.  
 Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
 God always faithful, you do not change.

**Prayer for Reflection and Revelation**    *A prayer of confession by Rev. Ryan Slifka, St. George's UC*  
 Living God,

You are the One who is always on the move,  
 always creating and re-creating,  
 always doing a new thing.  
 And yet, we confess, O Lord,  
 that our lives can become static,  
 routinely paralyzed by doubt and fear.  
 We remain ossified in patterns of greed,  
 covetousness, and self-interest.  
 We doubt your promises of abundant, everlasting life  
 and so we live in dread of our neighbours,  
 our friends, and our enemies.  
 Our souls remain still.  
 We do not love as you love.  
 Nor do we live as you would have us live,  
 with courage, generosity or the boldness of the gospel.  
 So in the silence of our hearts,  
 we offer up to you those things we have done and those we have left undone.  
*(silence for prayer and reflection)*  
 Forgive us, O God.  
 Renew us by your Spirit,  
 and reform us with your compassion,

remaking us more fully in to the image of Christ,  
and as nimble servants of your reign.  
Amen.

#### Assurance of Grace

One: Friends,  
the good news of the gospel  
is that God's love in Christ stretches so deep and so wide  
that it infiltrates every broken place in our hearts  
and in our world.  
Our hatred is met with love,  
our cruelty is met with compassion,  
our sins and our trespasses are met with forgiveness.  
It is greater than anything you have ever done,  
or could do.  
Open your hearts to let the love of God in,  
because in Christ you are forgiven, freed, made new.  
Believe in this great good news.  
Amen.

#### Sung Response: "A Mighty Fortress" VU 262 verse 1

A mighty fortress is our God,  
a bulwark never failing;  
our helper sure amid the flood  
of mortal ills prevailing:  
for still our ancient foe  
doth seek to work us woe;  
with power and malice great,  
and armed with cruel hate,  
on earth he has no equal.

#### Scripture Readings:

Psalms 146

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Do not put your trust in princes,  
in mortals, in whom there is no help.  
When their breath departs, they return to the earth;  
on that very day their plans perish.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God,  
who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith for ever;

who executes justice for the oppressed;  
who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;  
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the Lord loves the righteous.  
The Lord watches over the strangers;  
God upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked God brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign for ever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.  
Praise the Lord!

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"; and "to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength", and "to love one's neighbour as oneself",—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.' When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' After that no one dared to ask him any question.

**Choir: "Live my Life for Love"**

**Reflection: "Back to Basics"**

**Hymn: "Love is the Touch" MV 89**

Love is the touch of intangible joy;  
love is the force that no fear can destroy;  
love is the goodness we gladly applaud:  
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;  
love is the hope that can make us rejoice;  
love is the cure for the frightened and flawed: God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;  
love is the will to be whole once again;  
love is the trust of a friend on the road:  
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Love is the Maker, and Spirit, and Son;  
love is the kingdom their will has begun;

love is the path the saints all have trod:  
God is where love is, for love is of God.

**Virtual Offering:**

One: In love, we offer of ourselves.  
With love we pray that what we offer can transform the world.  
Two: *May our offerings be blessed by God, and become seeds of  
hope, justice and peace in the world.*

**Sung Response: “Behold, Behold” MV 115**

Behold, (behold,) behold (behold,) I make all things new,  
beginning with you and starting from today.  
Behold, (behold,) behold (behold,) I make all things new,  
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way.

**Prayers of the People: by Rev. Ryan Slifka**

One: God of Grace and God of Glory,  
On this Reformation Sunday, we give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us.  
For those who faced trouble and trial, and even death,  
for the sake of the message of your mercy  
and in the spirit of Pentecost, the right to hear and read the scriptures in their own languages.  
Two: We pray especially for those who now face trouble, trial, even death,  
for those members of the body of Christ who face persecution.  
For your beloved children everywhere—regardless of tradition—  
who live under the threat of religious persecution.  
One: For people, especially those of us who are Indigenous, who face the extinction of our own  
languages through neglect, oppression, or cultural pressure.  
We pray that all may hear the good news of the Prince of Peace in ways that resonate,  
and cause us to drop our weapons and defences for the sake of the kingdom.  
Two: We pray that you may help us not only walk in the shoes of our forebears, but fill them.  
May all of us gathered here today be as captivated by the life you have given us in Christ  
that we are freed to reach our friends, neighbours, and enemies with your unconditional love.  
One: Lord, we pray for the world you love  
in hope, and in trust,  
that we and your church might carry the light that has been passed down through the centuries,  
so we might be a beacon of your love to the world.

**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

**Closing Hymn: "For All the Saints"**

For all the saints whose labours just begun,  
who work for peace and heal the broken ones,  
they daily strive to honour God's own son.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

As saints of God, justice must be our aim,  
to honor all and treat each one the same.  
Of race, sex, or creed, may we never be ashamed.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Weep not for loved ones who have gone before,  
they have but entered through a sacred door.  
They love and guide us as they did before.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Commissioning /Blessing**

Go out into the world,  
living in the light of Christ!  
By the power of the Spirit  
do all the good you can  
by all the means you can  
in all the ways you can  
in all the places you can  
at all the times you can  
to all the people you can  
as long as ever you can.  
*—words attributed to John Wesley*

**Musical Benediction: "Sent Out in Jesus' Name" MV 212**

Sent out in Jesus' name,  
our hands are ready now  
to make the earth the place  
in which the kingdom comes.  
The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain  
into a world of love, of justice and of peace.  
The task is ours to do, to set it really free.  
O help us to obey, and carry out your will.

**Reflection**  
**"Back to Basics"**

It is Reformation Sunday, a day when we recall the birth of our Protestant tradition, begun when Martin Luther sent his 95 Theses to Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg and Archbishop of Mainz from 1514 to

1545, and Archbishop of Magdeburg from 1513 to 1545. As a powerful member of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, he was the first to receive Luther's writing on the changes he felt were needed in the church of his time. It is also claimed – notably by Philip Melanchthon, a friend and collaborator of Luther's, and a major influencer and shaper of Protestantism, that Luther actually nailed his 95 theses to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, where scholarly papers were often displayed.

In Luther's time, the power and influence of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church – including its wealth and the way that money was raised – was cause for concern and for reform. Luther's many writings shaped some of what we still claim as essential to our belief as a denomination like the grace of God being freely given and not earned by actions, the authority of the bible (and not one person such as the Pope), and the need for relationship with God not brokered through the church. Five hundred and four years later, we are still in a process of reforming and renewing our church. I think in many ways we are still striving to look beyond ideas and practices that may not feed our faith or help us to grow spiritually. We are working to get back to the basics of our own faith and the stories we share.

Centuries before Luther's time, Jesus was often seen as a 'reformer' of his own Jewish faith traditions, encouraging and teaching his followers - and those who questioned him – to live with love and justice but also in deeply humble and genuine relationship with God, who we are called to love with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our minds, and with all our strength.

The scribe who questions Jesus in this passage after hearing him answering the law-focused Sadducees in the preceding verses (Mark 12:18-27) would also have been very well acquainted with both the traditional Jewish laws and the laws of the Roman Empire. His enquiry about Jewish law, or commandments, seems a natural one for an individual whose life and work was focused on these laws. Jesus' answer would have been immediately recognizable to anyone in the Jewish faith. He quotes Deuteronomy, repeating what is known as the *Sh'ma Yisrael* which was – and is still – considered to be a central component of the Jewish faith and practice, to be repeated every day and included in every service of worship, and even worn on the body or posted at doorways.

*Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad* "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one"

When asked what is most important, Jesus goes back to the basics, back to what is known and taught. The foundation of declaring God's claim on our hearts and minds laid, Jesus the reformer goes on to add what we call the "Golden Rule" that we must love our neighbour as ourselves, quoting the book of Leviticus. The scribe, knowing the law well, asserts that Jesus is right and that these commandments (including Jesus' addition) are more important than the proscribed rituals of worship practiced in their time.

Basic, simple, foundational. Love God. Love your neighbour as yourself.

Radical, challenging, transformative. Love God. Love your neighbour as yourself.

Would our church look any different if these 'laws' were followed in everything we did or in every decision we made? How are we showing our love for God? How are we living out our love for our neighbours? I've often preached on this passage focusing on just who those neighbours may be - and I believe that as a community Applewood is very aware of the wideness of God's "neighbourhood." We have become – and continue to grow into our identity as - an Affirming congregation, specifically including those on the margins and those in the LGBTQ+ community in our God loving neighbourhood.

We strive to be a good neighbour in Applewood, and in Mississauga, finding room for a 'Blooming Boulevard' to bring pollinators to all of our gardens, offering space for groups like Scouts to meet and promoting community events on our sign and in the AppleLog.

Could we be more loving? Beyond the restrictions of the pandemic, could we offer a clothing bank in our building or invite a community cooking group to use our kitchen? Could we share our church grounds to plant a community garden, or host a community dinner at no cost for those who may be hungering for nourishment and for community, or even radically change our building to create space for affordable housing?

Could we go back to the basics of love, knowing how much God loves us?

Jesus is as clear in his answer today as he was two thousand years ago in his exchange with the scribe. God's most important rules are about relationships. Bonds with God and with all others – rooted in love – bring us closer to God's kingdom right here and now.

May we all become 'reformers' – of our church community and of our own lives as we follow Jesus' way of love, of justice and of hope. Amen