

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on the 19th of June.

Announcements

The people of Knox Bayfield acknowledge with gratitude the territory upon which we live, work, play and worship. Knox is on the traditional lands of the Anishinabewaki, Attiwonderonk (Neutral), and Mississauga peoples within Treaty 29, of 1827. We are all treaty people. We acknowledge that The Presbyterian Church in Canada was a part of the residential school system. We seek a new relationship with the First Nations of this land, one based in truth, respect, and reconciliation.

HYMN Let There be Light #727

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: There is One who seeks us and who meets us

All: One who heals us, whose love washes over us

One: There is One who sets us free for joy

All: This One is God. Come, let us worship God

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON¹

Creator God, you made a world of amazing diversity – with unique creatures living inter-dependently. We praise you with awe and wonder. You created diversity through culture and language, custom and community which are expressed with creativity and compassion over and over again. We praise you with awe and wonder. By the power of your Spirit, give us new eyes to behold your wonders. Teach us how to share in the praise your creation offers you day by day.

Creator God, within the diversity of your creation we often find we prefer the familiar. We question why everyone cannot speak our language, hold our values, share our customs. Too often we don't understand how discrimination hurts others or how our preferences are harmful to others and the earth. Forgive our familiar assumptions. Open our minds and hearts to the stories of others and the cries of suffering throughout the earth. Amen.

¹ PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

The prophet Micah declared that God requires only three things of us: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. God offers forgiveness and peace to all who repent and seek reconciliation with God and neighbour. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**Hymn For the healing of the nations #736 with the music from #146
To Hear The Word Of God**

Prayer For Illumination

God of wisdom and hope, your Word offered guidance and healing through many generations. May your Spirit guide us as we listen to the stories of your people. May we find wisdom and hope, guidance and healing through your Living Word, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Tanakh*	1 Kings 19:1-15a	[B#326/W#362]
Tanakh	Psalm 42 And 43	[B#515/W#568]
Epistle	Galatians 3:23-29	[B#188/W#200]
Gospel	Luke 8:26-39	[B#68/W#69]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

Hymn Open my eyes, that I may see #500

Message...

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

Our readings today are part of a larger story. It is helpful to know a little about the context to better understand the passages. In many ways, this helps us to recognize how our life stories fit together individually and within community.

In our reading from 1st Kings the passage begins in the midst of a much larger story. We enter the story during the time when all of the tribes of Israel were organized into one united kingdom. After Solomon died, the ten northern tribes rebelled and set up their own kingdom, which they called Israel. Only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to the lineage of David. Their southern kingdom was called Judah. It may be helpful to look in the back of the pew bible with the white edge, at Map #2.

Israel, the northern kingdom, had Samaria as its capital. Judah, the southern kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital. Both kingdoms were able to co-exist, yet at times they were enemies and at times they were friendly. This lasted for almost 200 years until Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 BCE.

The stories of Elijah are connected with the political and religious history of the northern kingdom of Israel. Elijah's time was during the reign of King Ahab in the ninth century BCE. King Ahab created a political alliance with his Phoenician neighbors by marrying Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Sidonians. Jezebel encouraged King Ahab to worship the god, Baal. The people of Israel were also encouraged to worship both Baal and YHWH.

The prophet Elijah protested the worship of Baal, which resulted in the slaughter of the Baal prophets. Our reading today begins with Jezebel swearing revenge on the prophet Elijah. He fled for his life, going first to the southern kingdom of Judah, then into the wilderness. He is in despair, asking God to let him die. He travelled forty days and nights further into the wilderness, to Horeb the mount of God. Horeb is the name given to a mountain that is also called Sinai, where Moses and the people who were led out of Egypt entered into covenant with YHWH. There are similarities between Elijah and Moses. Both became so frustrated and weary that they pled with God to let them die. Elijah's journey of "forty days and forty nights" echoes the time Moses spent on the mountain.

It may be that Elijah's wilderness experience was a spiritual desert. A desert that many experience. Elijah's journey into the wilderness is also related to his activities as a political and religious dissenter. Dissenting can feel like a "desert experience". People feel isolated from their culture and even their families. This story of Elijah demonstrates that God is present even when we turn away and feel abandoned. In our deepest fear and isolation, God continues to equip people for work in the world.

In Luke's gospel, we discover a very different experience. When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a man fell at his feet pleading for mercy. This man, naked and alone, lived in the tombs among the dead. He was an outcast in his community, often shackled and kept under guard. His life was out of his control. We know he lived in Gerasa, opposite Galilee, which had a mostly non-Jewish population. When asked his name, he replied Legion, the

name of a Roman army unit. A Roman Legion had about 5,000 troops, which indicates great demonic power.

Jesus liberated and healed the man. Salvation was holistic, bringing life to body, mind, spirit, and relationships. In a final demonstration of healing love, Jesus sent the nameless man home to share his story of healing.

From one perspective, God exercises a measure of judgment and the containment of evil, yet evil still has the power to wreak havoc, and living things still suffer consequences. Jesus gave permission for the demons to enter the herd of swine which ran over a cliff into the lake. According to ancient Middle Eastern demonology, evil spirits cannot survive in water² Although the removal of the demons is worth the loss of the animals, the loss of the livestock is catastrophic for the owners. The swineherds and the community were afraid, despite the miraculous healing, and they told Jesus to leave.

We do not know many details about the Gerasene man. We see similarities to people who are homeless and suffering with mental health issues. Many are unable to be employed. Many have been abandoned or have abandoned their families and homes. Most lack basic necessities. People who are homeless are at much greater risk of being victimized. When the 14th century theologian Julian of Norwich saw the redemption of Christ juxtaposed against the destructive power of evil, she "laughed greatly," for she saw that in the end the "fiend" would not prevail. Every wound and sorrow inflicted by evil would, in Christ, be healed.

Jesus demonstrated that God has power over evil and an unparalleled compassion for those who seem lost. God transforms lives. In Luke the demons feared it, the possessed man was saved and given new purpose, while the neighbors did not know what to do. When we encounter the presence of God in our lives, we may face similar dilemmas. We may resist change and flee to the familiar, living a life that makes no sense from a perspective of faith. When the community became fearful, they rejected Jesus. Evidence of God's power, a gift given for their benefit, was rejected because of the fear that rose up in them. The demons that had plagued this man for so long were gone, not simply driven away, but destroyed. A member of their community was healed and given new purpose in life. Yet Jesus was told to leave.

² (See, e.g., Luke 11:24, where Jesus describes demons inhabiting "waterless regions").

It is said that when Martin Luther felt oppressed by the devil, he would take courage by shouting, "I am baptized!" In this way he was grounded in his faith. In my readings for this passage the writings of David J. Lose caught my attention. He wrote, " A second element of this story worth exploring is more troubling: while Jesus has power over the demons, he does not exercise similar authority over the people." Jesus heals, supports, nudges, and corrects people, however, he does not force them. When the townspeople asked him to leave, he complied. He conquered wind and storm, illness and demons. The community was afforded free will and they chose to respond from fear.

Are you curious about their fear? I wonder what it was that drove the fear and their rejection of Christ. Perhaps it was simply his powerful presence that disrupted the social order. The towns people had been unable to cure or contain the demon-possessed man. Perhaps, this relates to the familiar saying...better the devil they knew. Did they have a false sense of security in the ways they had learned to cope with the demons? The communal identity was more difficult to change than individual identity. In Luke's account, creating change among a fearful community can be even more difficult than stilling storms or casting out demons. In first Kings, God called to Elijah three times. Twice God asked him what he was doing. The third time God told him to go to Damascus and anoint a new king. In other words, God told Elijah to get back on task. Elijah does not have to give up his frustration, but God will not let him give in to it. Elijah chose to act on God's call.

Perhaps, in these passages, we discover that developing a sense of our purpose can be challenging. God calls to us as a community and as individuals. We are linked together as we seek to live out our purpose. Sometimes, it is in our flight from danger and in the silence that we hear God calling to us. Sometimes, it is when we run to Christ in our efforts to seek healing. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

QUOTE No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. Aesop – storyteller

God's Spirit equips us to bring healing and hope to this world that God so loves. May the gifts we offer be multiplied to assist in the many efforts to share God's love.

BLESSING OF GIFTS & PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us join in prayer:

God of the earth and all its peoples, in Jesus Christ, you proclaimed the good news that true life and peace are found in you. Guide the people of your church to proclaim this good news in creative ways. Loving God, accept the gifts we offer you, today and every day. Put our time, talents and treasure to good use wherever they are needed. Open our hearts to share Christ's reconciling love to our families and communities. Help us to shine your light into the hidden corners to expose violence, exploitation, bigotry, dehumanization, and degradation within your creation.

God of healing and hope, we pray for all who are ill, and for those in pain. We pray for the anxious and discouraged, those facing death or the loss of a beloved, and for those struggling financially. Loving God, we pray for those who know sickness, pain, grief, loneliness, and anxiety. By your Spirit, surround each one with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. We ask your Spirit to linger with Adam & Christina, Grace, Rudy, Audrey, Betty Lou, and Rob. We lift up all those who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

We pray for indigenous communities around the world. Grant them wisdom and healing as they care for their communities. Bring healing to those with painful experiences and build bridges of understanding among us all. We pray for Presbyterian World Service & Development and Presbyterians Sharing as they work to bring healing and hope. We pray for the people of Ukraine in their struggle for freedom from Russia. We pray for those who are in Ukraine and for those who have fled for safety. We pray for students, teachers, support staff, and volunteers as the school year ends. God, bless this community of faith. Guide us in this time of change and upheaval. Help us to see the path you have prepared. Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our words. Hear our prayers. We join our voices together across space and time to speak the words that Christ taught his disciples ...

Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn What a friend we have in Jesus #746

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Live in love, abide in peace, and serve the ever present, ever faithful God. May God feed you body and soul. May Christ protect you. May the divine Spirit be alive within you and wash over you with the love of God, this day and forever more. Amen

Postlude Amen #766

#727 Let there be light

Let there be light; let there be understanding; Let all the nations gather; let them be face to face. Open our lips; open our minds to ponder; Open the door of concord, opening into grace.

Perish the sword; perish the angry judgement; Perish the bombs and hunger; perish the fight for gain. Hallow our love; hallow the deaths of martyrs; Hallow their holy freedom; hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come; your spirit turn to language; Your people speak together; your spirit never fade. Let there be light; open our hearts to wonder; Perish the way of terror; hallow the world God made.

623 Holy, holy, holy Words: traditional Music: F Schubert

Refrain: Holy, holy, holy, God almighty Lord!
 Holy, holy, holy, everywhere adored!

God without beginning, God eternal One reigns and rules forever all beneath the sun

Refrain

Power and love and wonder, circling round God's throne, Praise our God most holy, Lord of Life alone **Refrain**

500 Open my eyes, that I may see

Open my eyes, that I may see Glimpses of truth thou hast for me; Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.

Refrain Silently now I wait for thee; ready, my God, thy will to see; open my eyes: illumine me, Spirit divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear Voices of truth thou sendest clear, And while the wave-notes fall on my ear, Everything false will disappear. **Refrain**

Open my mouth, and let me bear Gladly the warm truth everywhere; Open my heart and let me prepare Love with thy children thus to share. **Refrain**

736 For the healing of the nations

For the healing of the nations, Lord, we pray with one accord; For a just and equal sharing
Of the things that earth affords. To a life of love in action Help us rise and pledge our
word.

Lead us forward into freedom, From despair your world release, That, redeemed from war
and hatred, All may come and go in peace. Show us how through care and goodness Fear
will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living, Let it from the earth be banned, Pride of status, race or
schooling, Dogmas that obscure your plan. In our common quest for justice May we
hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator God, have written Your great name on humankind; For our growing in your
likeness Bring the life of Christ to mind, That by our response and service Earth its destiny
may find.

746 What a friend we have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus All our sins and griefs to bear; What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh 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? Precious Saviour, still our
refuge: Take it to the Lord in Prayer. Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the
Lord in prayer; In his arms he'll take and shield thee; Thou wilt find a solace there.