

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on the 23rd of October

Announcements

HYMN Let There be Light verses 1, 2, 3 #727

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: We have come to worship God

All: With the weight of the world heavy on our hearts

One: We offer our prayer and praise in Jesus' name

All: Trusting God, we worship with heart, mind, soul and strength.

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON¹

Creating God, the mountains reflect your strength and majesty. Sunrise and sunset frame the day. O holy One you provide humanity with diverse gifts; farmers who tend the seasonal harvest and scientists who gather photos that glimpse the infinity of your universe. You alone are worthy of our praise. You alone give us hope. Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of Life, we praise you and join our voices to those of every precious thing to wonder at your mystery and majesty.

Merciful God, you created us with many gifts including intelligence and imagination. Yet we confess our gifts are often used to exploit your creation. We convince ourselves that our sin is not nearly as great as others, yet, every sin offends your purpose for us. Forgive us, we pray, and grant us a truer understanding of ourselves. Amen.

Hear the good news: God is generous and merciful, ready to forgive, offering us new life in Christ. Accept God's gift of forgiveness and share this gift with others.

May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn O Master, let me walk with thee #642

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination

Pour out upon us your Spirit, O God, that we might hear your word so that your wisdom will draw us closer to you. Through Christ, the Living Word, we pray. Amen.

¹ PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

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SCRIPTURE

Tanakh*	Joel 2:23-32	[B#848/W#944]
Tanakh	Psalms 65:5-13	[B#528/W#583]
Epistle	2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18	[B#213/W#230]
Gospel	Luke 18:9-14	[B#81/W#83]

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

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.

The readings of prophetic vision and prayer urge us to remain connected with God in all things and at all times. God's spirit is poured out on all humanity so that everyone who calls on God will be saved.

The prophet Joel speaks of hope and salvation to a community in the midst of great suffering. The plague of locusts were interpreted as a sign of God's judgment. This text belongs with the apocalyptic literature of the bible and speaks of theodicy. Theodicy is the tension that exist when we consider that God is good, God is all-powerful, and evil exists. How do these three exist together? How is suffering possible when God is all powerful? Joel replies, simply, that bad things will happen **and** there is hope... everyone is able to receive the Spirit. This passage speaks of God's special blessing on those who are marginalized by factors beyond their control yet the blame is often set on them.

Research indicates there are two types of stressors that cause suffering in the lives of individuals, families, and entire communities: horizontal stressors and vertical stressors.

Each of these categories affect individuals and communities differently

Horizontal stressors are painful events that occur over time. The stressors create upheaval in normal development across the life of individuals and groups. Acute events—such as a house fire, the loss of a job, a life-limiting diagnosis, or the death of a loved one—may impact only the intimate circle of family and friends. Events such as the tsunami in Indonesia, tragedies such as war, and catastrophic natural forces - hurricanes, tornadoes, ice storms - create groups of survivors across communities and nations.

The second type are vertical stressors—chronic illness, family violence, poverty, lack of education and health care, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression or deprivation. Vertical stressors are continual and persist as people are deprived of equal access to basic human rights, basic sustenance, basic dignity. These stressors are created by relentless patterns of privilege and power.

Joel is apocalyptic and provides prophetic revelation. He speaks to the terrible plague and flood and he reminds the people of the good that God provides with symbols of wheat, water, and full vats. Awful events have happened and they will not last, Joel says. We are to be fed, not destroyed.

How does this fit with the current issues facing the world and our community? Issues related to the pandemic, the climate, human rights, hunger, housing, crime, and war. It is a good time for us to look up from the task at hand and consider how we function individually and in community.

The larger issues can be overwhelming and we may feel helpless. It is in the overwhelming emotion of helplessness that we can pray and seek guidance. In prayer we begin to deeply connect with the divine and our sense of being. Yet, it seems that prayer is often neglected or rushed.

Each week we join our voices together in the Lord's prayer and ... sometimes it feels rushed. Let's take a moment to share the prayer, now, in a different way. I ask that you repeat the words that I speak. There will be a pause after your part – a time to reflect on the words that were spoke and a time to be.

In prayer we open ourselves to the work of the Spirit. It is possible to discover steps, sometimes small steps, that make a difference. Even when our actions seem inconsequential....it is possible to have an impact. In this church we collect the outer milk bags. Each time a bag is washed and brought into the church it adds to the collection in the wicker basket. Did you know ... volunteers crochet the bags into sleeping mats for people who are un-housed, both locally and internationally. It takes between 300-500 milk bags to crochet a mat, which provides warmth and comfort for individuals who have very little. The mat provides a sense of purpose in the lives of volunteers who crochet the plastic and for those who take a moment to wash an outer milk bag. The lives of many are

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touched by the simple action and milk bags are diverted from the landfill. With every action taken to assist others we make movement toward a better environment. It is as simple and as complex as building community.

When we reach out to one another ... everything counts. A simple good morning can lift someone's mood. They can feel seen. Perhaps more importantly it provides hope that someone cares. A flicker of light in a world filled with darkness. A can of soup may not be significant when you add it to your grocery cart to donate to the FoodBank. Yet, for the recipient, it may be the only nutrition on a cold winter day. For some, that can of soup may be the only food left in the cupboard at the end of the week. This holds true whether living in Toronto, London, or Bayfield. The donations provide a sense of community for many people. The volunteers who sort and deliver the food hampers. The recipients who receive the hampers receive nutrition and the message that they are cared for by their community. They are not alone. We live in a time of increased anxiety and other mental health issues. Isolation is a significant contributing factor. As we enter into the winter season there is good reason to make extra effort to reach out to others. The winter brings the reality of darkness with longer nights and shorter days. A good way to deal with this darkness is in building community. God works among us and through us.

Jesus shares the importance of prayer with the parable of two men who have gone to pray at the Temple. The Temple was a place of restoration, pilgrimage, worship, and inspiration.² Amy Jill Levine wrote, For both men in this parable, the Temple is a place of prayer. It is a place where God is found; where fidelity can be celebrated and reconciliation; where Jewish distinction can be proclaimed over and against Roman insistence on assimilation. It is in this same place where Jesus's followers continued to worship after his crucifixion."³ This parable may shift our focus into a broader and deeper understanding of who we are as children of God. The Pharisee, who seems to be righteous in his actions does NOT receive praise from Jesus. The tax collector, the one who did not see himself as worthy, the one who cried out to God for mercy is praised. Judgement belongs to only to God. Although the Pharisee in the parable thanks God for his good fortune, he reminds God how fortunate God is to have such a wonderful worshiper.

² Levine, Amy Jill Short Stories by Jesus p 196

³ Levine, Amy Jill Short Stories by Jesus p 198

The self-righteous, rule-bound religious leader, lacking in compassion and insight sits in contrast with the repentant and humble tax collector. Indeed, the word "Pharisee" is often linked with hypocrisy and self-righteousness. However, this oversimplification is unfair. Pharisees would interpret Scripture and help others to understand how to live within the laws of the Torah. Tax collectors were seen as collaborators with the Romans who had taken over their land. The tax collector was often experienced as unscrupulous and dishonest with the oppressed people, especially the poor.

Psalm 65 reminds us that when we are overcome by our brokenness, by our regret, by our guilt and shame ... God offers grace and salvation. We are offered a glimpse into the self reflection of both the Pharisee and the tax collector. They see themselves very differently. Jesus reminds us that appearances can be deceiving. The one called holy by society walks away from the temple wrapped up in his self-righteousness, unaware of his flaws. Meanwhile, the flawed tax collector went home justified. One prayed to praise himself while the other yearned for guidance from God.

Jesus challenges us to avoid the belief that it is our own efforts that are important. We are at our best when we live with humility. We are at our best when we recognize our many gifts are from God for the good of God's creation.

We are encouraged to remain connected with God in all things and at all times. God's spirit is poured out on all humanity so that everyone who calls on God will be saved.

Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Spirit of Gentleness (v 1, 4) #399

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

QUOTE Giving frees us from the familiar territory of our own needs by opening our mind to the unexplained worlds occupied by the needs of others. Barbara Bush—former First Lady of the USA

With humility for all that God has given us, we gratefully give for the work of the church and the healing of this world.

BLESSING OF GIFTS & PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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Just and merciful God, we lift our eyes to you in hope and gratitude. We thank you for your Spirit at work in all times and places, calling out the best in your people. Your Spirit guides us, showing us when we must repent and opening paths to reconciliation where we have offended. With the humility of the tax collector in Jesus' story, may we seek your justice and know your mercy.

Holy and merciful God, you know the joy that is in us when we offer ourselves, our time, and our possessions for the work you set before us. Use these gifts to heal and teach, comfort and challenge, that all the world might give you praise.

We pray for justice for the earth: guide our efforts to encourage those who work to protect your creatures and the habitats that are threatened. Help all the peoples to work together to aid communities at risk from climate change. Open our eyes to see how we can live responsibly and change our hearts to know we must.

We pray for justice among the nations. May we learn to generously share resources between countries with good harvests and those depleted by famine. Holy, peaceful God where there is aggression and intimidation between nations, spark the willingness to make peace and settle differences fairly.

We pray for justice in our court systems: we pray you will continue to guide those who serve with integrity, that the accused may receive fair trials, and that those who have been harmed are restored to fullness of life. May your Spirit grant compassion and wisdom to create humane treatment for those who are convicted to encourage their rehabilitated potential.

We pray for justice in the work place: May those who work for others be treated with dignity and earn a fair wage. May all who create employment earn a fair return. Help us, O God, to continue efforts to create equity and respect between those of different backgrounds and identities.

God, there are many forms of healing needed in our lives: We remember before you those struggling with illness of body, mind or spirit, those waiting for diagnosis or treatment, and all whose health challenges are invisible to others.

We ask you to linger with Jenny, Stephanie, Judith & Gerry; Adam & Christina, Audrey, Grace & Rudy; and Rob. We lift up all those who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges. Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our words.

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Resources include: PCC Worship Planner, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/> Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, and Feasting on the Word Companion, NRSV Bible

Merciful God, accept our prayers, spoken and unspoken. May we sense your overflowing love in our lives, in your church, and in all the world. 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

Spirit of the living God

#400

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

Have courage. Keep the faith. Rely on the strength that comes from God.

May the Creator nurture you, the Teacher walk with you, and the Spirit strengthen you, this day and forevermore.

Postlude

Amen

64 Be still and know

Be still and that I am God x3

I am the Lord that health thee x3

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust x 3

#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.

399 Spirit of Gentleness

Refrain: Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free.

Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters; you called to the deep; then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep, and over the aeons you called to each thing: then you wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.

You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand, and you goaded your people with a law and a land, and when they were blinded with their idols and lies, then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes.

You sang in a stable; you cried from a hill; then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still, and down in the city you called once again, when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind.

You call from tomorrow; you break ancient schemes; from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams; our women see visions, our men clear their eyes; with bold new decisions your people arise.

400 Spirit of the living God

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me, Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, move among us all make us one in heart and mind; make us one in love: humble, caring, selfless, sharing. Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love!

642 O Master, let me walk with thee

O Master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free; tell me thy secret; help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care. Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear winning word of love; teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me thy patience; still with thee in closer, dearer company, in work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong, in hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way, in peace that only thou canst give, with thee, O Master, let me live.