

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on the 8th of January.

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. There is much for us to learn as we seek a new relationship with the First Nations of this land, one based in truth, respect, and reconciliation.

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: We are called to serve in the name of Jesus

All: God calls us by name, we are beloved.

One: We witness God's goodness and grace

All: Praise be to God!

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON¹

Creator God, you formed the heavens, spread out the earth and made it fruitful. From your glory, you came to us in Jesus, your Son, to touch the earth with healing and hope. We praise you for all the gifts you have given us in Christ and in creation. In the strength of the Spirit, we come to renew our commitment to you, to serve in the name of Jesus Christ, who is one with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and always. Merciful God, in baptism you promise forgiveness and new life. We confess that we often prefer our old ways and resist the new opportunities set before us. We cling to harmful habits and grudges, failing to forgive one another and ourselves. Have mercy upon us, O God. Guide us to live with grace and generosity through Jesus Christ. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Friends, hear the good news of the gospel. Before the world was made, we were chosen to be part of God's family. God calls us to new life in Christ. Trust in God's forgiveness

¹ PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

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

Hymn Spirit of the living God #400

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture²

Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Tanakh* **Isaiah 42:1–9** [B#670/W#743]

Tanakh **Psalms 29** [B#504/W#557]

Historical **Acts 10:34–43** [B#129/W#134]

Gospel **Matthew 3:13–17** [B#3/W#3]

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

Soloist In The Bleak Mid Winter Linda Street

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.

This is the first Sunday after Epiphany. In our readings this morning we discover people who are living in times of great change. They are struggling to cope with challenging situations as they seek new ways to embrace life. Luke tells of Peter's struggle to grasp and live out the message of inclusion taught by Christ. Matthew shares the remarkable baptism of Jesus. The prophet Isaiah dared to speak of hope to the people of Judah who have endured war and displacement.

Most of us cannot comprehend the major disruptions of war. Yet, each of us have struggled. Over the course of our lives we face many transitions, some minor, others significant. Imagine for a moment a student walking into the cafeteria at a new school. He looks at all the people and wonders where he should sit, which group he might join, how he will be received. Perhaps you can relate to a parent who walks into the bedroom of the

² Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

daughter who has just left for university. The parent pauses, wondering what lies ahead—not just for the daughter but for herself. It was an expected event, yet it is disruptive and challenging to deal with. In a long term care facility, imagine an elderly man sitting alone in his room. His body and cognitive abilities are faltering. He may feel alone and confused, surrounded by unfamiliar people and things. Each of these individuals are facing similar questions. Who am I? Where do I belong? What is my purpose? These questions often surface in young adulthood and they never really go away. We look at our roles, our work, our peer groups, our accomplishments, or the things we accumulate. What we need, according to the prophet Isaiah, is to hear how God gives us identity and value.

Isaiah offered comfort and hope to a people who had been conquered by the Babylonians and sent into exile. They are reminded of who they are and whose they are. They are reminded that God loves them. The prophet declares that they have an identity: they are a people valued by God. The One who made them has not turned away from them. Israel belongs to God just as sheep belong to a shepherd. The prophet spoke to the exiles and continues to speak to us as individuals and as communities of faith.

We can take comfort in the realization that our imperfections do not cause God to stop loving us or laying claim to us. We can trust and hope in the God who is with us. Even when there is a flood of chaos, even when that chaos was caused by our poor choices. God is here with us.

To better understand the passage from Isaiah it may help to look at the map at the back of the white-edged bibles. I find the geographical context helpful in understanding the story. Map 2 crosses over onto 2 pages. On the left is the Great Sea, what we know as the Mediterranean Sea. At about the middle of the map you will see Syria, Damascus, Sidon, Tyre, Jerusalem, Judah Follow the across the page to Babylon in Babylonia. The river Euphrates flows from the north above Syria down to the lower Eastern Sea. In looking at the maps we can begin to comprehend the great distance that separated the people of Judah. In that great distance, with life in chaos, they questioned whether God had abandoned them. They questioned the character and power of God. Questions that were difficult to ask and challenging to reflect on.

Some were in the homeland and trying to survive as armies and vandals perpetuated the chaos and devastation. There was little left for the survivors to work with after the fall of

Judah. Many were scattered in exile as a conquered people. Some lived along the banks of the Euphrates River where the Babylonians allowed them to earn a living, with some running their own business. Yet, the people were spiritually depleted.

The prophet Isaiah faced the difficult challenge of helping his people restore a sense of purpose and hope for those demoralized by war, captivity, devastation, and exile. They were cut off from their sacred stories and traditions of faith. They had lost their sense of community. Many wondered whether the covenant made with the God of Abraham and Sarah had been broken.

This passage reminds me of the times when I have experienced loss and the sense of being lost. I am mindful of individuals who have shared with me their experiences with the darkness of spiritual crisis. A time of deep struggle and often, a sense of emptiness – of being in a bleak vacuum. Isolated from others and distanced from God. How does hope enter into such times? Isaiah spoke of hope in God's tender love in this servant song.

In her commentary, Stephanie A. Paulsell wrote, "When Jesus rises up, newly baptized, from the waters of the Jordan, he enters into a ministry saturated with the vision Isaiah bequeathed to him and to us, a vision of leadership guided by mercy and a hunger for justice. Jesus' whole life was a passionate response to God's call for this new way of living."³

The scriptures speak of rebirth with the parting of the sea waters for Moses as the Hebrew people escaped Egypt. The parting of the waters for Joshua when the people reached the promised land. Water is used as a symbol of rebirth—people enter the water as one thing ... the slaves or wanderers... and emerge re-born. The people of Judah on the Euphrates River. The waters of baptism.

In his commentary, Steven Driver explored how the gospel of Matthew echoes the writings in Genesis when describing the baptism of Jesus. Genesis tells of the Spirit hovering over the waters when the Word of God was present in the beginning and created the world. In Matthew, the Spirit of God hovers over the waters, and the Word of God spoke to claim Jesus. Genesis describes God creating order out of chaos while Matthew describes God calming human chaos through his Word. Genesis describes the abundant

³ Feasting on the Word: Preaching the RCL-A, V1: Advent through Transfiguration.

possibilities of God's work while Matthew describes the renewal of those possibilities through God.

The baptism of Jesus began the public ministry for which he was created and called. In his baptism, we develop a deeper understanding of the Trinity of God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus. One God yet three. At Knox College, the Rev Dr Charles Fensham helped students explore an understanding of the Trinity with the concept of perichoresis. He shared the ways in which St. John of Damascus (8th century) used perichoresis to describe how the members of the Trinity relate to one another, "they are made one not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other and they have their being in each other ..."⁴

Perichoresis is a Greek word, roughly translated, means to make space around. It refers to the way in which someone or something makes space around itself for others or something else. One way to describe perichoresis is God's mutual indwelling. God can be both in Godself and also in us. It is the idea of God moving in and through someone or something. Moltmann's metaphor for perichoresis is the divine dance of the three Persons of the Trinity. Father, Son and Holy Spirit make room for each other, move in and through one another, dance with one another, in such a way that creates a mutual indwelling while still maintaining space for each individually.

This metaphor makes the most sense to me as it describes the energy, heart, and intention of the Trinity. Another metaphor would be water, ice and vapor as three and one at the same time. Our weather recently provided rain, snow, and the mist of fog all at once.

John the Baptist stood by the Jordan River preaching a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". The baptismal font also serves as a reminder of our ongoing need to acknowledge our imperfections and receive God's grace. Water signifies forgiveness and new life in Christ. The grace in the sacraments comes not from any power in them but from the work of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ and with his church.⁵

God shared the message of rebirth with love, acceptance, and peace through the prophets, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ. The stories of transformation provide a way for

⁴ <https://nbseminary.ca/the-dance-is-not-perichoresis>

⁵ From Living Faith,

us to become aware of the limitations we place on our relationship with God and with others. We can be open to new understandings and new perspectives as we consider the ways of God in Jesus Christ. Our hope rests in God. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Be thou my vision #461

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire. *St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)*

Come with gratitude and joy to the table. Bring the works of your hands and the gifts of your lives as an offering of praise.

Doxology We give Thee but Thine own, What e'er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

Prayers of People, Blessing of Gifts

Loving God, you invite us to bring our doubts and fears, our joys and concerns, and our praise to you. We thank you that you are with us in every circumstance, and that you walk with us through times of celebration and sorrow. This day, we open our hearts to you, knowing your Spirit prays in us with sighs too deep for words.

God, our Creator, we bring our gifts to you with grateful hearts. May the gifts spread your love in the world and be received as a blessing.

Where people are tired from work or weary with responsibility; where time and resources are inadequate and costs overwhelming, send your Spirit with strength and renewal...

Where people face danger or live under duress; where people are persecuted for who they are or what they believe, send your Spirit with courage and comfort...

Where people have suffered the loss of love or purpose; and where love is complicated and challenging, send your Spirit to bind up the brokenhearted...

Where people are ill and worry for their future; where people suffer pain or disability and long for healing; and where people face the limits to life; send your Spirit with healing and hope...

Where people seek a reliable friend, a true comforter or wise adviser; where the lonely long for company to cheer them, and where isolation makes people doubt their value, send your Spirit of wisdom and companionship...

We remember love ones who have died and pray for those who look ahead in loneliness or sadness.....We pray for those who have faced challenges in health, in their families or at work.....God of light and love, we seek your strength and guidance in each challenge we will face. Draw near to those who must confront illness, loss or changing circumstances. We lift up Jan and family as they mourn the loss of Danielle. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. God of hope, we ask you to linger with Lyle, Deb and family; Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Rob; Stephanie and family; and, Grace & Rudy. We lift up all those who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

These things we pray in Jesus' name, gathering our prayers together in the words he taught, **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.**

Soloist O Holy Night Linda Street

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Hold hope in God, through whom all things are possible. May God restore the path before you that leads to grace, mercy, and peace. May Christ fill you with the treasure of faith and love. May the Holy Spirit help you to live in hope. Now and forevermore. Amen

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

306 Praise God

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures high and low;
Praise God in Jesus fully known; Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

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!

461 Be thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that thou art, thou my best thought in the day and the night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom; be thou my true word, I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord; thou my great Father, thine own may I be, thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breast-plate, my sword for the fight; be thou my armour and be thou my might; thou my soul's shelter and thou my high tower, raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain earthly praise, thou my inheritance, through all my days; thou and thou only, thou first in my heart, high King of heaven, my treasure thou art!

High King of heaven, when the battle is done, grant heaven's joy to me, O bright heaven's Sun; heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O ruler of all.