

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on the 22nd of January.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive] ¹

One: In the name of Christ

All: we accept the invitation to discipleship

One: In the midst of a world where cruelty abounds

All: we proclaim the God of Compassion

One: In the midst of despair that threatens whole lives

All: we proclaim the God of Hope.

One: In the midst of indifference and apathy,

All: we proclaim the God of Love.

One: Come, let us worship together

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON²

Gracious and loving God, you walk with us, guiding us by calm waters along pathways of justice and peace. You are always with us, in times of joy and sorrow, when we tremble with fear and when we are courageous. We offer you our praise with love and loyalty.

Merciful God, you call us to follow your way of compassion, yet we fall into criticism and bickering about one another. You call us to follow your ways of peace, yet we remain entrenched in our divisive but too often we remain divided.

You call us to trust you and too often our fear and doubt are overwhelming. Forgive us, O God, and strengthen our commitment to follow your ways. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God calls to us with love and welcomes us in with a warm embrace. Hear the good news of the Gospel. Rejoice that in Christ we are loved and forgiven. Be at peace with God, yourself and with each other. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

¹ <http://www.onearthpeace.org/>

² PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

Hymn I heard the voice of Jesus say #671

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture³

O God, we seek your wisdom and truth in the Scriptures. Send your Holy Spirit upon us to open our minds and hearts to receive the gift of your Word. Challenge and comfort us in what we hear, and strengthen our willingness to follow in the ways of Christ. amen

Tanakh* **Isaiah 9:1-4** **[B#638/W#706]**

Tanakh **Psalms 27:1, 4-9** **[B#503/W#555]**

Epistle **1 Corinthians 1:10-18** **[B#166/W#173]**

Gospel **Matthew 4:12-23** **[B#3/W#3]**

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

Message Nothing to Fear?

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 promise of spring takes hold as the sun peaks out to brighten our days. One month after our longest night service, our readings speak of light breaking into the darkness. Isaiah proclaimed, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.'; the psalmist posed the question, 'of whom shall I be afraid?'; the ministry of Jesus took shape as he called the early disciples, and, Paul dealt with the murkiness of divided community.

The disciples were called from all aspects of life, just as you are from different backgrounds and diverse perspectives. Yet, each of you have responded to a call from Christ. The call that pulls you ... into the community and work of the church. There is a sense of purpose and satisfaction and, sometimes, frustration and fear.

We are equipped with survival instincts of fear to help protect us. It makes us alert to danger and prepares us to deal with threatening situations. Stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline are released. Your blood pressure and heart rate increase as you start breathing faster. Your blood floods into your limbs, making it easier for you to start

³ Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

throwing punches or to run away from the danger. And, fear can be immobilizing when it becomes ubiquitous and mis-directed.

I remember an event when fear threatened to overwhelm me. It was many, many decades ago. I had just arrived home alone after going to a movie with a friend. Oddly, the house was dark and no-one was home. It may be difficult to imagine – I was in my early teens and had just been to the theatre uptown to watch a horror movie with a friend. The movie had something to do with rats and a memorable Michael Jackson tune. It's interesting the ways in which fear can instill a clarity around memory. I sat on the front porch of my dark, empty home and I was afraid. And, I did not appreciate that feeling of fear. Somehow, in that moment, I was able to recognize that the fear was about the unknown. So, as the evening grew cooler and as a sense of courage began to develop, I walked into that dark house. And, I remember feeling like I wasn't alone. That even in the midst of the trepidation, and the fear, and the dark ... I experienced some sense of realization about fear that I find echoed in the psalm. I may have been reciting Psalm 23, oh the drama of early teens, as I walked into the dark hallway. In that moment I understood at some level that with God there really is nothing to truly fear ... because God is there. So, I defiantly left the lights off and walked through the dark house.

Psalm 27 began with the rhetorical question, "whom shall I fear?" (v. 1). There is a discomfort with v 2-3 as evil, enemies, armies, and false witnesses are described. The lectionary removes the description of who is causing the overwhelming fear yet it is an important aspect of this psalm. The psalmist speaks of tough situations, the "day of trouble," the awareness of enemies lurking, the need for protection.

Each of us have dealt with the fear that arises with broken relationships, financial concerns, threats of violence or manipulation, and physical and mental health concerns. The psalmist ends by with the encouragement, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

Fear is often related to the dark. Isaiah proclaimed a great light that shines into the darkness when the northern territory of Israel was occupied by the Assyrians in 733 BCE. Isaiah spoke into a time of fear for the people of Israel, a time of "distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish". Invaders attacked Judah and the military occupation left many

struggling to survive. In the darkness of cruelty and oppression, Isaiah spoke of working through the fear by trusting in God.

During Epiphany, we remember the magi, who set off with their gifts on a journey into the unknown, their path illuminated by the light of a single star. Isaiah reminds us that God's light shines as "a light to the nations." and that we are called to share this light. Matthew wrote with hopeful anticipation. The prophecies were being realized ... the messiah had become a reality. Yet that amazing beginning was fraught with challenges.

Jesus began to proclaim the message of good news of the kingdom of heaven. Despite the news about the Royal family, it can be difficult to understand the concepts related to royalty and kingdoms. Kingdom does not really seem to fit in our 21st century Canadian perspective. N. T. Wright describes their understanding of the kingdom of heaven as the rule of God's on earth as it is in heaven, with the removal of the yoke of oppression, servitude, and poverty. The removal of the hierarchy of human value. This represented a new way of being included in the call to share this knowledge with others in community. Matthew described Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee and calling two sets of brothers: Simon Peter with his brother Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee - James with his brother John. He called these fishermen to follow and they immediately left what they were doing as if they had been waiting to hear this voice, to be issued this call, so that when it came, they dropped what they were doing. Augustine in his book of Confessions wrote, that "our hearts are restless until they rest in thee." In that moment, their ability to discern the voice of God seemed simple. Yet, it can be complicated. There are so many voices calling to us. The voice of our culture, the voices within our families and friends, the voices of our upbringing.

Many of us, likely all of us, have faced moments in our lives when our story had a significant challenge or shift. Books and movies are filled with fictional stories that allow us to see aspects of our lives in a different way. Stories that have the hero responding to a call that challenges them in new and terrifying ways. Frodo and Bilbo from the Lord of the Rings, Neo in the Matrix. In the book or movie, we can sit back and relax as the character struggles with challenges on their journey. We can analyze or criticize the interpersonal conflicts that inevitably occur. We can be critical of choices made in difficult

situations. Yet, in many ways, the stories that we observe may mimic our journeys. We don't face many actual dragons or bullets, but we do endure challenges.

Paul speaks to a certain set of challenges. The challenge of working with others. In the letter to the Corinthian's, we have the bird's eye view of their trouble. A divisiveness threatened the cohesiveness of the congregation. Paul attempts to pull them back to a cohesive community. They are reminded of the need to be united in the same mind and the same purpose as Christ. To set their old ways aside, to let go of the unnecessary fear, and to trust in God.

In closing, we know that the disciples responded and struggled with their call, their fears, and their faith. Events did not unfold as they anticipated. Their understanding of the Messiah shifted as they grew in relationship with him. Their lives were changed in remarkable ways. You have responded to God's call to worship in community. Your efforts contribute to serving God in relationship with others and the missions of the church. Your lives bear witness to the teachings of Christ and you do this knowing the challenges will rise up, again and again. Hold onto the hope and light of God. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

HYMN He leadeth me # 650

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. C. S. Lewis – writer

God, the source of all good things, provides all that we need. The first disciples to follow Jesus had no way of knowing that their examples would be followed for centuries. We offer our gifts, the fruit of our labors, and the dedication of our hearts in loving service in the name of Christ. While we do not know which lives will be touched, we trust that good will come of everything we offer to God.

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 the People, Blessing of Gifts

Oh holy God, we join with Christians around the world to pray for peace and unity, and for justice and mercy in your fragile creation. We remember before you today people living with war and violence, especially those places with hatred that is ancient.

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

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We lift up the people of Ukraine, Russia, Afghanistan, and Palestine. God, embrace your creation with love and share the vision of peace deep within our souls to be shared with one another.

God of our salvation, receive our gifts, the fruit of our labour, and the dedication of our hearts. We ask your blessing to multiply these gifts for those in need.

We lift up all who are living with economic uncertainty, those struggling with rising costs, and those who have lost their jobs, their savings, their homes and businesses.

We remember before you today people struggling with illness and suffering, those waiting for diagnosis or treatment, those who know grief or fear...

We remember before you today your whole creation and its many vulnerable facets and faces.

Teach us how to care for the rips and tears in the fabric of the world you love so we may live together wisely.

God of light and love, 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.

Where new life is beginning and hope dawns; where there is laughter and joy, healing and positive change, send your Spirit to rejoice with your people ...

These things we pray in the name of Jesus, gathering our prayers into one voice 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.

Hymn Will you come and follow me (v 1, 2, 5) # 634

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Go into the world to live with the gift of unity in Christ. May the love of God, the peace of Christ and unity in the Holy Spirit be yours now and always. Amen

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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

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.

634 Will you come and follow me

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? Will you go where you don't know and never be the same? Will you let my love be shown; will you let my name be known; will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name? Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same? Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare? Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name? Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same? Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name? Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same? Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around, through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name. Let me turn and follow you and never be the same. In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

650 He leadeth me

He leadeth me: oh blessed thought! oh words with heavenly comfort fraught! Whate'er I do, where'er I be still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me! By his own hand he leadeth me! A faithful follower I would be, for 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom, sometimes where Eden's flowers bloom, by waters still, o'er troubled sea, still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ever murmur nor repine, content, whatever lot I see since 'tis my God that leadeth me!

And when my task on earth is done, when by thy grace the victory's won, e'en death's cold wave I will not flee, since God through Jordan leadeth me.

671 I heard the voice of Jesus say

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest; Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast!" I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad; I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down, and drink and live!" I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream; My thirst was quenched, my soul revived and now I live in him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, "I am this dark world's light; Look into me, thy morn shall rise, and all thy day be bright." I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun, And in that light of life I'll walk till travelling days are done.