

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship with Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this snowy 29th of January.

Announcements

Mission Moment

One day, a neighbour asked the Rev. Tim Choi, Executive Director of Edmonton Urban Native Ministry (EUNM) in Alberta: "What difference has the ministry made after all these years?" This prompted the Rev. Tim to think about the impact the ministry has had on Indigenous people in Edmonton's Eastwood community. He reflected that the journey towards healing and reconciliation must be like a long and flowing river. The harm caused by generations past requires many future generations to heal. In this sense, EUNM is like a little brook that runs alongside this river. God has shaped this ministry into a place of hope for all who gather there. Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing are helping us on the path to healing and reconciliation through Indigenous ministries like EUNM.

We are gathering online today due to the important work being done by Hydro One in Bayfield. The hydro poles are being removed as the underground lines are being completed.

Next Sunday- Feb 5th - there will be a time to socialize and have a light lunch after the worship service.

The people of Knox Bayfield acknowledge with gratitude the territory upon which we live, work, play and worship. We live on the traditional lands of the Chippewa and Haudenosaunee, 'People of the Longhouse,' Anishinabewaki, Attiwonderonk (Neutral), and Mississauga peoples within Treaty 29, of 1827. We are all treaty people. We recognize the harm incurred through colonization and we acknowledge that The Presbyterian Church in Canada was a part of the residential school system. We affirm the 94 Calls to Action, refute the Doctrine of Discovery, and accept the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There is much for us to learn. We commit to growing in healthy relationship, one based in truth, respect, and reconciliation, with the First Nations of this land.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. 2 Cor. 13:13

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON¹

O holy God, your ways are beyond our comprehension, your majesty incomparable, and your love beyond imagination. We praise you for your steadfast love and offer you our trust for the days ahead as we seek to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

God of light and life, you come to us in Jesus to open a path to new life, but we fall back on what is familiar. We confess that we are comfortable with our old ways and we have little tolerance for change. Forgive us and shine your light on the way we can follow into your future.

Assurance of Pardon

Be assured of God's forgiveness and be at peace with God, secure in the knowledge of God's love. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you.

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture²

O holy God, open our understanding by the power of the Holy Spirit, that as the Word is proclaimed we may receive holy wisdom to understand the gifts you have bestowed on us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. 1 Cor. 2:12

Isaiah 58:1-12

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?"

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

¹ PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

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

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Matthew 5:13-20

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.

No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

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.

It is good to linger with the important question posed in the Mission Moment. The question, "What difference has the ministry made after all these years?" can be asked of the congregation, the church and the denomination. The scripture readings from Isaiah and Matthew lead us to question how we are living out our faith in the world today.

We have spent time with Isaiah since the beginning of Advent. Today's reading is part of the third and final section of this book. In the first segment, the prophetic ministry of Isaiah began in Jerusalem between the close of 700 BCE. Nearly a century and a half later (540 BCE) the second portion of Isaiah prophesied the liberation of Judah from Babylonian captivity. Shortly after, the third book was set in the restored Jerusalem and Judea 538-515 BCE. The temple was still in ruin and the people were adjusting to new ways of being. Isaiah chapter 58 presents an explicit call for people to worship in a way that leads them to care for others.

The ways in which we worship shapes and forms us as individuals and as a community. At its best, worship in community provides a safe space where we share in God's love and grace, and then we are sent out to share God's love with others. God provided Isaiah with

insight that the future of the community would be determined by its ability to embrace justice.

In his commentary, A. F. Connors shared, "One year during Holy Week, a few Christians from well-endowed congregations in a major metropolitan area spent a night with homeless friends on the street. They were looking for the suffering Christ in the lives of those who spend their days and nights suffering from hunger, disease, and rejection. It was a chilly night, and rain rolled in close to midnight. Looking for shelter, the handful of travelers felt fortunate to come upon a church holding an all-night prayer vigil. The leader of the group was a pastor of one of the most respected churches in the city. As she stepped through the outer doors of the church, a security guard stopped her. She explained that she and the rest of their group were Christians. They had no place to stay and were wet and miserable, and would like to rest and pray. Enticed by the lighted warmth of the sanctuary, she had forgotten that her wet, matted hair and disheveled clothing left her looking like just another homeless person from the street. The security guard was friendly, but explained in brutal honesty, "I was hired to keep homeless people like you out." As the dejected group made their way back into the misery of the night, they knew they had found their suffering Christ, locked out of the church."

True worship includes those in need, it helps to loosen the bonds that diminish people, seeks to remedy injustice, and extends shelter to the homeless. In our reading from Isaiah there is a rebuke against the people of Judah. They had been following the rituals and practices of their faith without much thought or intention. God spoke through the prophet against false worship – reminding them that worship without justice has no value. There was a gap between the ways in which they lived and the teachings of their faith. They participated in the rituals, in fasting, and they humbled themselves with sackcloth and ashes. Yet, they continued to oppress those who were lower on the social hierarchy. Isaiah revealed that the intention of fasting went beyond the individual abstaining from food and drink.

Fasting is intended to create a heightened self awareness and an awareness of the needs of others. In that heightened awareness action is taken to reach out to those in need: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for one's own, and, address the issues and structures responsible for injustice. The phrase, "hiding oneself from one's own kin" in

verse 7 refers to the pretense that some people do not exist or that someone else will care for the needy. The intention of fasting results in taking action to resolve the issues that create corruption and oppression. The practice of fasting is intended to be transformative for the community as they seek right relationship to bring about healing, security, and free-flowing relationship with God. In her commentary, Carol J. Dempsey wrote, "As the one seeking God responds to the needs of another, so God will respond to the one who seeks." Worship is the lived experience of being in right relationship with one another and with God. Right relationship is rooted in God's divine love, which calls for justice, righteousness, and compassion. Righteousness is the approval of God, that which is deemed right by God.

The call to right relationship with God and one another continues in our gospel reading. Jesus proclaimed that he would fulfill the law and the prophets with righteousness flowing from relationship with God into the world. His followers were told to be like salt and light. Jesus shared the two metaphors to describe his followers and what they do in the world: you are the salt of the earth and you are the light of the world.

Salt has an edge as well as a satisfying taste. It makes the taste of food come alive. In certain circumstances, salt can be used as a preservative, keeping food fresh for an extended time. Salt is a flavor enhancer and it affects the tenderness of baking, particularly breads. The human body cannot live without sodium. It's needed to transmit nerve impulses, contract and relax muscle fibers, and maintain a proper fluid balance. When disciples do not follow in the ways of Christ they are like salt that has lost its taste. This is an easily understood metaphor - salt is used to alter or enhance the taste of food... just as the disciples enhance goodness within creation when they seek justice, show mercy, have integrity, take on the role of peacemaker, and courageously proclaim their faith. We, as disciples, are the salt of the earth when we bring flavor to our relationships with each other.

Jesus spoke of the disciples being a light of the world. Light allows us to see and provides energy. The light of the sun helps vegetation to grow and provides power for solar electricity. In the winter we are reminded of the impact of light on our own energy. The dark, dreary days seem to sap energy. A period of sunshine can provide a sense of being recharged. Disciples are like light when relationships are developed and repaired, when

diversity is celebrated, and when justice and mercy is pursued. These are the good works that glorify God. Like light, we reflect God's justice and mercy.

Charles James Cook wrote about the passage, noting "often interpret this to mean that we are not to hide our gifts and talents by placing them under the metaphorical bucket.

However, there is another reason for light to shine. There is darkness in life—external and internal. Jesus encourages his followers to bring light to a dark and broken world. The light is the light of the gospel, and it draws all people to its warmth and radiance. " In order for the light to be seen, we must be willing to go where the darkness exists, to engage and walk through it, so that, in time, the light can overcome it. Annie Dillard writes, "You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary." We must go into those dark places, bearing the light of Christ. The light is not given for our own personal enjoyment."

In closing, I ask that you continue to linger with the important question posed in the Mission Moment in a slightly different way. Perhaps the question could be posed as, "What difference has your faith made after all these years?" Consider the many ways in which your faith has enriched your life. Consider the many ways in which you have shared your light in reaching out to others in loving relationship. The ways in which you have reached out to those in need: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for one's own, and, address the issues and structures responsible for injustice. Consider the many ways in which you have followed Christ and the many ways in which you will continue to do so. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Prayers of People, Blessing of Gifts

God of justice and righteousness, thank you for the gift of your son Jesus Christ who came to live out your love in this world. Thank you for his words and actions which continue to challenge and guide us today.

He called us to be light for the world and salt for the earth. We thank you for the ministries undertaken through Presbyterian World Service and Development and its many partners, for the light they bring to lives under so many different pressures, and the necessities they provide to sustain communities and make hope tangible.

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

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And so we pray for your world with all its wonders and its worries, which rest on our hearts and yours:

We pray for those who need your justice, God. For those who sleep on the cold streets, those who do not have enough to eat, and those who worry about how to make ends meet for their families.

We pray for all those facing violence, In their homes or communities, for nations in conflict and for places struggling to recover after flooding, drought, storm or unrest.

We pray for refugees and political prisoners; for children who must work instead of going to school and for parents who long to give their children a better life.

Sustain each of these people with your hope that their needs can be fulfilled and rights restored. Empower us to use our resources to do what we can for them, and give strength and courage to advocates and aid workers who bring hope to birth in many places.

We pray for all who need your healing touch, God. For people who are confused or afraid, for those in hospitals and nursing homes and those who care for them, for all who are dealing with long-term disability or mental illness, long Covid and the many illnesses that thrive in winter.

We pray for those who have encountered loss through the death of a beloved, change in circumstance or disappointed hopes. Surround each one with your peace and comfort so that hope for healing will be renewed each day.

Compassionate God, make us salt and light for the world. Remove the presumption that we know best how to fix others. Teach us to be compassionate and caring neighbours, unafraid to reach out. Encourage us with your grace and inspire us by your Holy Spirit, for you are always with us.

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, where there is good news to celebrate, send your Spirit with rejoicing and gratitude...

These things we pray in Jesus' name, 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.

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Go in faith to be salt for the earth and light for the world in Jesus' name. May God's love restore you. May Christ's teaching inspire you. May the Holy Spirit equip you to serve in this divine creation blessed by God, holy One and holy Three. Amen.