

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on the 5th of March.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: God set Abram, Sarai, and Lot on a journey. God calls us to follow with faith

All: God blesses our journey in faith

One: Jesus invited Nicodemus to be born again. Christ invites us to become a new creation.

All: Christ calls us out of darkness into his light. We are saved through him.

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Holy and loving God, we know we cannot earn your grace. It comes to us, not as something owed, but as a gift freely given. Confident in your love for us, even when we falter, we confess our sins to you in faith. Gracious God, we come before you in need of forgiveness and grace. You call us to trust in you completely, and we struggle to do so. We are often filled with fear when we follow your lead. We struggle to understand the new life Christ offers. Forgive us, we pray. Help us to be born again into the life of Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Friends, God is for us and not against us! For that very reason, God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Believe the good news, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven! May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn In the bulb there is a flower #674

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture

God of Wisdom, we turn to scripture to listen and learn. Send your Holy Spirit to help us listen carefully so that we hear what we have not heard before and learn to follow Christ with deeper understanding and renewed commitment. Amen

Scripture¹

TANAKH*	Genesis 12:1-4	[B#10/W#10]
TANAKH	Psalms 121	[B#571/W#633]
EPISTLE	Romans 4:1-5, 13-17	[B#154/W#161]
GOSPEL	John 3:1-17	[B#93/W#96]

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

Journeys

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.

When we travel through the stories in scripture each week it may be helpful to see the people, as complex individuals. It can be tempting to oversimplify them as heroes or villains. Rather, it is helpful to be mindful of their journeys in faith that encompass the spiritual with the physical and relational. When we do so, we are able to learn from their courageous journeys. The journeys of Abram, Sarai, and Nicodemus. When we share our journeys with each other we are able to grow and be transformed in our faith.

Jesus speaks of transformation in John's gospel as he describes re-birth as a new way of knowing and experiencing the divine and the world. When this happens, he says, it will be as though we have begun life all over again. Jesus told Nicodemus, and continues to tell us, that God's kingdom is here. The kingdom of God is not a far-off destination ... it is here now as a gift from God. It is a new way of being, a new way of seeing, hearing, and living. But, first we look to the re-birth Abram and Sarai experienced with their call in

Genesis 12:1-4 [B#10/W#10]

This is the beginning of the story that introduces generations of people to the patriarch of three faith traditions -Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

These few verses from Genesis form the bridge between the primal history and the story of Israel's earliest ancestors. Through the call and promise to Abram and Sarai, a crucial claim is made about the relationship between God and humanity. God wants to be in relationship with us.

¹ Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

Before we look at Abram's story, we can look a little further back. A great history is revealed in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. God made all of creation and then people were tempted to become like God. In shame they first hid from God and then they were sent from the garden. Their children became adults and one killed the other. Cain was sent out of his community to live east of Eden and his family grew. The genealogy in Chapters 10 and 11 leads into the story of Noah and the flood. Again and again, people persistently pivot away from God and God mourns their choice. Curse and punishment did not change human behaviour and God promised to never to respond in such a way again. Once the flood cleared, the family continued to journey throughout the region. Eventually, the people determined that they had the technology to build a tower to reach God. The tower of Babel tells how they tried to claim a place among the divine. Scripture tells of their journeys through the lineage from Adam to Noah to Shem to Terah to Abram. The stories are an account of the many families and how they moved further and further east from Eden as they pivot away from God.

Abram had two brothers, one died in Ur of the Chaldeans and left a son named Lot. We met up with Abram in our reading. He is 75 years old and God is telling him to leave the clan that he belonged to. He was told to leave and go where he has never been. To leave his kin, his home, to leave all that he knew. God would guide his way and protect him. It was a time when the expectation held that you would live the life of your ancestors and follow the traditions of your family... yet, Abram- at the age of 75 - took his wife and his nephew and all that they owned to begin the journey into the unknown.

In our time, we know it is common for people to leave their family and their community to go out into the world. Our neighbours may be from different cities and different countries, from diverse faith communities, from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. In our churches and congregations we know the experience of God calling. It is not always the best qualified or trained individuals who are called into service. We witness many who are led by their faith and in that faith, God prepares them to fulfill their purpose. The expression that comes to mind is that God doesn't call the qualified... God qualifies the called. It is our faithful response to God's leading that we are blessed with gifts and talents, and with acquired skills.

Yesterday we were able to hear more about the faithful journey of Ruth Talbot from her family and the Rev Dr Stephen Farris. Ruth lived out her faith as a good and faithful servant of God with her family, her church, and her neighbours. She was an integral part of this congregation for 78 years as she shared her gifts of leadership, hospitality, and warm humour. She responded to God's call on her life by sharing her love of God and scripture with people. God called and she responded.

God called and Abram responded. This story tells of Abram, Sarai, and Lot's willingness to embrace a new way of being. Their faith in action when they step out into the unknown. Their trust was rooted in the belief that God would guide them on their journey. They were not perfect in their choices or actions, and ... they continued to try. Their faith wavered at times, yet they would pivot back to God. In their faithfulness, new nations were born. Their story helps us to recognize them as flawed people who courageously struggled in their faith journey.

The struggles continue throughout the centuries. The gospel of John tells of Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, who joined Jesus in Jerusalem during the Passover feast. Nicodemus was curious about Jesus but unable to seek him out in the light of day.

John 3:1-17 [B#93/W#96]

Nicodemus reminds us that many search for understanding. He was able to persist with this difficult conversation with Jesus as he struggled with the teaching, both literally and figuratively. Their conversation helps us to pause and consider a new perspective on our own faith. It is in the journey, in the action of doing what is true. In John's Gospel believing and doing are linked.

We know a few details about their encounter. Perhaps Nicodemus went to Jesus in the night so he could keep his faith secret, separate from the rest of his life. He recognized that Jesus could only do the signs if God was with him. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again by water and Spirit, he was instructing Nicodemus to let God work in his life. The invitation to Nicodemus, and to us, encourages a shift in our imaginations and calls us to re-consider our relationship with God. Jesus invites us to come into the light of day and become full participants in the abundant life he offers. We cannot do this on our own. It is God who will give birth in water and Spirit.

God continues to call to us ... to be attentive to God's call on our lives. How will we respond? Stories in scripture help us to see how God chooses to remain in relationship with us. We are called to be with God and with one another in this journey of faith. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Spirit of the Living God #400

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote For if eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has-not according to what one does not have. 2 Corinthians 8:12

All that we have is a gift from God. In faith and gratitude, we return a portion of the abundance we have received.

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

O Holy God, you provide shade in the heat of the world's troubles and light in the shadows of life. We thank you for your care; you sustain us. Thank you for the energy to focus on the things we can do day by day, putting our love and care to work in community and creation. By the power of your Spirit, bless us with the insight and passion to act in hope.

Attentive God, we bring our concerns for the world to you in these uncertain times. We think of Abraham and Sarah setting off to an unknown land and pray for people on the move: For those seeking safety and shelter, for those fleeing violence; for those settling into a new home or community; for those who travel, whatever the conditions.

God, walk with us on the way. We think of the Psalmist looking to hills and we pray for people seeking help: for those seeking help to make ends meet as their financial stability is threatened; for the vulnerable seeking safety; and, the oppressed seeking freedom.

Gracious God, we dedicate our offerings of time, talent, and financial resources to you with deep gratitude— for your call on our lives, your guidance in the baptismal journey, and for blessing us that we may share our blessing with others. Bless all that we bring for your own good purposes.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. 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 light and love, draw near to those who must confront illness, loss or changing circumstances. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering.

God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief. May their memories be a blessing. We ask you to linger with Brenda and family as they mourn Ruth; Deb and family as they mourn Lyle; Jan and family as they mourn Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Brian; Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim and Jane; Stephanie and family; Betty Lou; Ruth George; and, Grace & Rudy.

We lift up all 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.

Joined together in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all majesty and honor are yours, Holy One, forever and ever.

We think of Nicodemus turning to Jesus with questions in his heart and we pray for people seeking answers: for those with health challenges, seeking diagnosis and treatment; for those wondering if you exist, O God, wondering if you have a purpose for them; we think of Jesus, calming the fears among the disciples. He is our Companion on the way who taught us to pray together: 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 Blessed assurance Jesus is mine #687

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Go out in faith, trusting in God's sense of direction. Remember how much God loves this world and so love the world in the name of Christ. May God keep you by sunlight and moonlight; may Christ encompass you with love; and may the Holy Spirit empower you with new life; now and forever.

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.

687 Blessed assurance Jesus is mine

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain This is my story; this is my song: praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story; this is my song: praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight, Visions of rapture now burst on my sight; Angels descending bring from above, echoes of mercy, whispers of love. **Refrain**

Perfect submission, all is at rest; I in my Saviour am happy and blest, Watching and waiting, looking above, Filled with his goodness, lost in his love. **Refrain**

674 In the bulb there is a flower

In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed, an apple tree, In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, Seeking word and melody; There's a dawn in every darkness, Bringing hope to you and me. From the past will come our future; What it holds, a mystery, Unrevealed until its season, Something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning, In our time, infinity; In our doubt there is believing, In our life, eternity, In our death, a resurrection, At the last, a victory, Unrevealed until its season, Something God alone can see.

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!