

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

**Announcements**

**HYMN Praise God #306**

**CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]**

One Rejoice in the Lord, you people of God!

**All We will sing songs old & new to praise our God**

One God loves righteousness and justice

**All We will do our best to serve God faithfully**

One The earth is full of God's steadfast love

**All We come to worship with glad hearts, to offer our love and loyalty**

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON<sup>1</sup>**

Merciful God, your word and your promises come to us when our hearts are filled with rejoicing and when our hearts are heavy with sorrow. Yet, we struggle to share the same gifts you have given us with our neighbors.

We fail to honor your creation and all her creatures. We yearn for your mercy and forgiveness. Help us to amend our lives to follow the ways of your teachings. Show us the pathway toward healing and peace. We pray in the name of Christ, Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**Hymn Praise him, Praise him #372**

**To Hear The Word Of God**

**Prayer For Illumination and Scripture<sup>2</sup>**

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.

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<sup>1</sup> PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

<sup>2</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

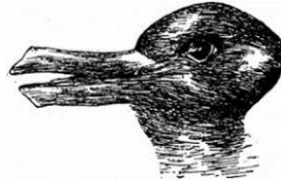
**Scripture<sup>3</sup>**

|         |                       |                      |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Tanakh* | Hosea 5:15–6:6        | <b>[B#838/W#934]</b> |
| Psalms  | Psalms 50:7–15        | <b>[B#519/W#574]</b> |
| Epistle | Romans 4:13–25        | <b>[B#155/W#161]</b> |
| Gospel  | Matthew 9:9–13, 18–26 | <b>[B# 9/W#9 ]</b>   |

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

**Message**

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 be back to worship with you this morning. You will find an illustration in your pew and it is there to illustrate the concept of perspective. Take a look at the creature and try to determine what it represents. You will likely see one but if you look closely you may see two. It demonstrates, in a simple way, that there is often much more to see than what initially meets the eye. But first...

In the last few months I have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in conferences in BC and Nova Scotia. Travel is a little disconcerting for me with planning what I will need to pack and trying desperately to not overpack. On that point I was successful. Both events were good opportunities to learn, to ask questions, and to share experiences. It was an excellent way to meet with people, in-person, to re-connect with people I haven’t seen in a few years and to develop new relationships. At the 148<sup>th</sup> General Assembly I had the opportunity to speak with elders and ministers from across Canada. More than 220 Presbyterians joined together at the conference. Our Presbytery sent 5 people. Two ministers: Rev Theresa McDonald Lee, and me; two elders: Jill Bennett, St. Mary’s, Laura Tryssenaar, Listowel; and, it was delightful to have one Young Adult Representative: Anna

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<sup>3</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

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McIntosh, St. Marys. There were 12 young adults and 3 student representatives actively engaged in the entire event.

During the assembly we stayed at the Loyola Residence at St Mary's University in Halifax. It is a beautiful, older building that is undergoing renovation. We stayed in sections of 5 rooms that shared a bathroom and a shower. My neighbour had a little furry visitor one night but I found no evidence of mice in my room. The elevators were slow and time consuming and the stairwells were not accessible from top to bottom. So, the only real option was to wait. The wait provided an opportunity to meet and speak with others. The majority of the people in the residence were part of the General Assembly and, I know this because we had name tags. Now, at many conferences people will forget to wear their tags after the first session. However, by luck or foresight, it was decided that our name tag was our meal ticket. The only way to get into the cafeteria for meals – wear your name tag. Which meant we could identify our large group by the colourful tags hanging around our necks.

One of the significant benefits to being away at the conference was the opportunity to focus on the people and the many reports. The distractions of home fell away as I settled into the rhythm of the event and my surroundings. Rather than eating alone at home, I walked into a cafeteria of 200+ Presbyterians and joined a table of new friends. Most of my meals were spent with different people. All of us sharing news of our lived experience in our congregations and presbyteries. We were able to discuss the reports that we heard and explore new ideas of how to tackle problems. We were able to listen carefully to one another, to hear concerns, and to share in the good news of our faith. For a few short days, we were able to shift our perspective away from our individual lives.

Perspective is an interesting concept. Artists use perspective to shape what is seen on paper or canvas with the illusion of space and depth on a flat surface.

In the gospel reading, we discover that Jesus spent a great deal of energy shifting perspectives. He shared his time and energy with people. He heard their concerns and responded to them. In the gospels we often read accounts of him eating, sitting, and travelling with people from all walks of life. He physically connected with all people.

He demonstrated time and again that no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy.

Matthew writes of his own calling -Jesus spoke to Matthew at the tax booth and told him

to follow. So Matthew got up and followed Jesus. We do not know Matthew as a tax collector however, historical reports indicate that tax collectors were often considered corrupt because of their commitment to the Roman imperial system. Their efforts sustained the empire and the elite of society and oppressed the marginalized. Their profit was often made by collecting more money than what was legally due for their own personal wealth. They were considered disloyal and were often shunned. Matthew made a major shift when he committed to Jesus, when he turned away from the Roman system and committed to God's expectations. In that action, Matthew began to collect the stories that would be shared across the centuries. The gospel stories of Jesus touching or being touched and the healing that would occur. In the reading today, one was dead, one had been bleeding for years. Others were powerful and privileged. No one was excluded from the mercy and love offered and all were called to follow in the ways of Jesus Christ. When we read the gospels, it is helpful to ask who among us might be counted in the group with the outcast, the sinner, the unwell? Some are visible, some not. Some are able to express their needs and many are unheard. Who among us suffers silently? There is often a fear of rejection that isolates many people. I spoke earlier of the cafeteria meal setting. Imagine for a moment walking into a room with over 200 people, with tables full and partially full. With animated conversation between people who seem to be well known to the other. Imagine walking up to the table with an empty seat and asking if the chair is taken. These are moments that can be terrifying for many people. Moments when the fear that we may not fit in, that we may be rejected. Many people are often afraid to share their vulnerabilities. The issues are exacerbated for people struggling with addiction, mental illness, the homeless, the working poor, and many others are seeking a sense of community in their faith journey. Jesus reached out to the margins and calls for all to follow him.

In Matthew's account, Jesus does not reprimand or criticize those who seek him out. He simply eats and drinks with them. Jesus gathered the outcast, the reviled, the ill and the wounded. Crowds follow him to witness his healing and to be healed. He would sit with them and hear their concerns. The touch of Jesus healed a dead girl and a bleeding woman. Both were restored to life. The hemorrhaging woman approached Jesus and touched his garment. The bleeding woman had been isolated for eighteen years. Perhaps

we have a better understanding of the impact of her physical isolation after our time with the impact of the pandemic. The social isolation created significant issues for many. Imagine the long term impact of year after year of being untouchable. In her faith, she reached out to Jesus for healing and was told that her faith made her well. She courageously crossed the boundary between purity and impurity. Greg Carey, a New Testament professor, wrote that this woman, along with Jesus, proves that purity is more contagious than impurity. What a thought provoking concept. Purity is more contagious than impurity. It gave me pause to reflect on what we consider pure and impure. Jesus heals in many ways. The healing is physical, relational, and social. We see the impact when the ostracized are able to be touched, to be hugged, and to re-join their community. They are no longer alone, even in death. Throughout this passage, Jesus seeks and is sought. He found Matthew and Matthew followed. The crowd gathered and a woman is healed. The father sought Jesus and he healed the girl. In what ways do we follow this symmetry in our lives and in our church communities? How do we see with a wider lens, a deeper perspective?

In the drawing did you see two creatures? Were you able to see the rabbit and a duck? In this time of scattering as our buildings sit empty and we are physically restricted from joining together, perhaps we can discover new ways to connect with people. Perhaps we can discover a deeper understanding of the issues that concern others. Perhaps we can find new ways to connect with those we do not yet know. Our perspectives can deepen when we try to see one another through the loving eyes of God. The scriptures remind us that we are all children of a richly diverse and divine Creator. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

**Hymn Will you come and follow me (v 1, 4) #634**

**THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD**

**Quote** Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost. Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Our lives overflow with the goodness of God. Sharing what we have so abundantly received, we bring our offerings of time, talent, and financial resources to share within God's creation with gladness and gratitude.

**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**

God of our past and our future, We come before you with grateful hearts, trusting that you walk with us through all the times of our lives. You create a future for us, calling each of us to make a difference. We are grateful in the knowledge that there is a place and a purpose for each of us in your world.

Holy One, hear us now as we pray for the world in its deep and diverse needs. We ask your blessing on the Rev Mary Fontaine as she begins her year as Moderator of our denomination. Guide her efforts to reflect your will. May she have strength and patience and may she receive the full support of the church.

We pray today for those who face danger and despair in these troubling times. Bless those who step into the strife, the fires, the chaos, and the places of great need.

We remember before you those living with hunger, and all those caught up in unrest and violence beyond their control. We pray for the homeless and underhoused and that their needs for shelter, food and medical assistance are met.

We pray for all those facing fear or frustration, those wrestling with sorrow or discouragement: those who live with illness or pain....those who know the grief and change of bereavement....

We pray for all those working to relieve suffering and those who seek justice and peace: those who work to bring healing and comfort which offer support and care to those who suffer.

God of healing and hope, Guide our congregation to engage each day with faithfulness. Where we need correction, show us a new way; where we need love and encouragement, inspire us. Unite us as we travel into the future you are create

God of laughter, you call the little children to be protected by all who follow in your ways. We ask you to linger with the children who seek relationship with you and lift up Owen to your special care. Guide him to live in your good ways and help his grandparents to nurture him as your beloved. 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

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for the end of suffering. God of compassion, we ask you to linger with all who mourn Rudy and Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Carter, Jim & family; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; and, Warren & Lori. 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. Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Joined together in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all majesty and honor are yours, Holy One, forever and ever. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people:

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      Guide me, O thou great Redeemer      #651**

**To Go Forth In God's Name      Commissioning and Benediction**

Go with faith into the week ahead with the sure knowing that Christ walks with you. And may the God who made us, the Christ who mends us, and the Spirit who gives us life bring you joy and peace, now and always.

**Postlude                      Amen**