

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

Announcements

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.

As we gather to worship, we remember and repent of the role the Presbyterian Church in Canada played in colonization and genocide with the doctrine of discovery and the residential school system. The word repent means to turn around – and we ask for the strength to turn around and see the harm done and the path forward. We make this acknowledgement, knowing it is incomplete and inadequate. May we listen, learn, and repent.

HYMN Praise God

#306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Mysterious and merciful God, we praise you for all the ways you offer us abundant life. We are thankful when the sun rises and the earth blooms around us. Thank you for your gift of each new day.

God, when evening falls and we find ourselves in a lonely place, we count on your presence for comfort.

We thank you for guiding us to you and for the healing you offer when we are broken and hurting.

We worship you as the Source of life and love, comfort and courage day by day by day. Receive our prayers and praise, O God, now and always. Gracious and merciful God, In Jesus you show us the way of compassion and forgiveness. Yet we struggle to care for the needs of those who suffer. We blame and judge each other in the moments you call us to act with kindness and mercy. Open our hearts so that we may embody Jesus' teachings and walk in his way.

Assurance of Pardon

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

Hymn Tell me the stories of Jesus #348

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture

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.

Scripture

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.

Hopefully all of you are aware of the book discussions here at Knox. Most Monday's we meet in the lower level of the church. I believe we are on our 11th book since 2019. There have been a variety of people taking part. Lois and Judith plus Marilyn and Marlene from Goderich and recently Lynn from Bayfield. There are many Monday's when we make it through only a page or two. We often read ahead in the book, a little or a lot, but sometimes we just show up ready to listen and to join in the discussion. Each author provides thought provoking material that launches our discussion. We explore the many ways in which our lives and our faith intersect. We share our diverse experiences and gain insight from our shared stories. Our books are heavily marked by the time we make it to the last page. Somehow the clean and neat book becomes heavier and thicker as we journey through it. Perhaps the pages are absorbing some of our discussions along with the ink from highlighters and pens. Certain passages are marked with heavy asterisks. It is interesting how frequently we have all marked the same paragraph or sentence. And, it is wonderful when one person draws our attention to something that others initially passed by. When I was preparing for today I was mindful of the book discussions.

The bible holds the stories of many individuals and groups of people through thousands of years. It demonstrates the ways in which faith shaped the lives of individuals within their societies. We are able to gain insight from these stories that continue to impact the lives of billions. Many of the stories include details that catch everyone's attention and, then, we discover details that we somehow missed.

The passages from Isaiah and Matthew tell of the invitation to share in the abundance of God's creation. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the timeless call to the people of God as they wandered in the wilderness. All who feel empty, lost, and without hope. those who continue to thirst and hunger for purpose in life. The Invitation is for those who have ever cried out, "What is the point of my life?" God invites you to an abundant life. What will you do with the invitation?

In his sermon on Isaiah 55, J. R. Brokhoff shared, "One time workmen were blasting rock in a quarry. After attaching the fuse and withdrawing to a safe distance, they noticed a three-year-old child wandering in the danger zone. They called to him and waved their arms for him to run away, but he only looked at them with amusement. Then his mother appeared and sized up the situation. She did not run to him nor yell for him to come to her. Instead, she knelt down, opened wide her arms, and smiled for him to come. Instantly, her son ran to her, and when the explosion took place, he was safe in her arms. So God in Christ looks at us with love and with open arms and says to us, "Come." Come and receive God's forgiving grace. Come quench your thirst for forgiveness and acceptance. Come and feast on God's wisdom. Come and find nourishment for your soul, strength for your life, and purpose in living. Come! You're invited never to be the same again."

In the gospel of Matthew we enter into the familiar story of feeding the multitude. Are you aware that only one miracle made it into all four gospels? It is this miracle of Jesus feeding thousands on the hillside on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Just before this day, Jesus crossed the lake for time alone in prayer immediately after the disciples learned of the brutal murder of John the Baptist. When retreating for a time of prayer, Jesus walked into a large gathering crowd ... he saw their need—for health, for truth, for nourishment, for peace of mind—and he was deeply moved. He has compassion for them and tended to their needs. When the end of the day approached the disciples, aware that their resources

were dwindling, encouraged Jesus to send the crowd on their way. They had little to eat even for their small group. Yet, Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And Jesus said, "Bring them here to me." In a place far from fast-food outlets and grocery stores, mercy appeared as fish and bread. At first it seemed there was little food—just five loaves and two fish.

William G. Carter wrote, "The needs are great. It seems like we have so little... According to the gospel of Matthew, however, Jesus did not let his fishermen off the hook. As surely as this story of feeding the multitude is about Jesus, the founder of the feast, it is also a story about his twelve disciples. When the twelve said, "Lord, get rid of this crowd," he replied, "You give them something to eat!" Now that's a striking aspect to this story. Jesus did not turn stones into loaves of bread to feed the crowd. Instead he demanded his followers to pitch in and give what they had. The gospel of Matthew insists the disciples gave their own bread and fish. There is no mention of a young boy who offered his lunch; that's the gospel of John. This is Matthew, and in Matthew, Jesus said, "You give them something to eat."

Imagine .. all the people from these towns, from their farms, from their homes... suddenly gathering to hear Christ speak, to be healed by him. Yearning to satisfy their spiritual hunger, despite a growing physical hunger... sensing they were in the presence of the divine. Imagine Jesus walking through the crowd, approaching you and your loved ones. He would know the needs of each person before a single word was spoken.

So, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over -- twelve baskets full. There was abundant food to feed the gathered 5,000. And remember ... that only counted the men so the crowd was likely at least 12,000. Imagine. Imagine leaving your homes in the early morning because you heard that Jesus had been sighted. Imagine all the people of Bayfield, Grand Bend, Clinton, and Goderich gathering together.

The disciples were surprised —but they were often surprised by Jesus. He was not what they anticipated, although he looked like any other Middle Eastern man - he was completely outside the realm of their experience. Within his human body there was the

miraculous power of God. So, the disciples were surprised. I wonder, was there was an element of fear. Perhaps they were afraid of the immense need within the crowd. The spiritual and the physical need. Perhaps they were afraid of their own hunger and their dwindling resources. Perhaps the brutal murder of John the Baptist shed new light on their choices. Perhaps they simply wanted time with Jesus, away from the crowd.

It is vital to be attentive to the struggles, the assistance received or given, and the new way of being. It is important to remember the details, the enormity of the crowd, the initial tiny amount of food. It is important to remember the people and their experiences. All four gospels tell of this miracle, although only John shares what happened after they ate. Jesus was able to spend time alone while the disciples headed back across the lake. In the night, Jesus would re-join them by walking out on the water in the midst of a storm.

Such stories help us to comprehend God's compassionate, all encompassing, love. Not an abstract connection with a distant God. This is God in human form who lived in the reality of pain and hunger, healing and feeding. God, the ultimate power of the universe, encourages relationship building and peace in this world; encourages efforts to end perpetual hunger and housing instability; and, encourages our efforts to develop spiritual connection between all people.

We discover that each of us has purpose and responsibility, entrusted to us by God. Jesus did not reach out to singlehandedly feed the crowd. He told the disciples to feed them. God does not work alone but through relationship with people, through you and me. To follow Jesus is to express our faith in action... with love, seeking justice, and compassion toward others. The gospels tell that we meet Jesus in reaching out to the "least" of our brothers and sisters, our siblings in Christ—the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned, the lonely.

When Jesus told the disciples to feed the five thousand, the disciples thought it was impossible. The need was so great and they believed their resources were so limited....which sounds so very familiar. How often do we feel the same? When the disciples worked together with Jesus, they realized resources were plentiful. The events that took place on that hillside in Galilee two thousand years ago were a miracle that is repeated today in the actions of the faithful.

In closing, we must remember that Jesus called the disciples and they discovered that they were able to do more than they thought possible. We are often urged by the Spirit to live into our purpose, yet we turn away feeling powerless or fearing that our resources are too limited. We struggle to act in faith. We struggle in our relationship with God. It is God who called the patriarchs and matriarchs... Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob ... It is God who sent the Messiah. It is God who called Saul on the road to Damascus. God calls to each of us by name, knowing our needs, providing all that is necessary, nudging us to do our part. Nothing can separate us from this love of God. ... praise be to God, the Spirit, and Jesus the Christ ... Amen

Hymn Teach me, God, to wonder #704

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote

The sacrifice that honours God is a thankful heart. So let us present our offerings with thankful hearts, grateful for all God's goodness to us. 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

Blessing of Gifts

Blessed are you, God of all creation, for your abundant goodness. Use the gifts we offer to spread your goodness in Jesus' name. Let your Spirit work through us so that your goodness will move through us into the world wherever we go. Amen.

Prayers of the People,

O God, we give you thanks for you in the changing times of our lives. We give thanks for every occasion you have surprised us with a blessing; we give you thanks in the pressures of this present moment. We are grateful for the strength and courage we find knowing you are right beside us. Guide us as we seek wisdom and patience to face a future filled with many questions and challenges.

Help us trust in your goodness as we wrestle with what comes next.

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 08 06

We pray for those who are hungry and those who struggle with the challenges of being unhoused in these challenging times. We pray for all who feel the stress of rising prices. Give those with more resources the confidence to share generously.

We pray for those who have lost everything in wild fire or flooding; and, for growers facing drought, shortage of workers and uncertain markets.

Guide the leaders in our communities and our nation as they face these complicated problems. Give them wisdom and courage to work together to make decisions for the wellbeing of the most vulnerable.

We pray for all who are sick or in pain, those waiting for diagnosis or treatment, and all who face chronic health challenges. Equip those who offer health care to manage the demands they face to provide care in timely ways. Bring healing in body, mind, and spirit to all who struggle.

We pray for those who offer hospitality to others this summer in their homes and workplaces, in their churches and communities. Keep us alert to the needs of visitors and strangers and open our hearts so that your goodness will touch those we meet. Lord Jesus Christ, you walk with us through all the days of challenge and celebration. Draw near to all who face unexpected sorrow and join with those who celebrate happy occasions. Be our Bread for the journey to sustain us and encourage us, whatever the days ahead holds for us.

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you know by heart all that causes suffering and pain. We pray today for all those in need of healing and comfort, whatever the source of their pain. Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who are lonely. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering. 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: Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage to face our future, assured of your

presence and power to sustain us. 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

Softly and tenderly

#640

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

Wherever you find yourself in the days ahead, in a lonely place or in the midst of a crowd, watch for signs of God's goodness. May God our Maker fill you with confidence, May Christ bring you peace and comfort, And may the Holy Spirit renew your energy to greet the gift of each new day.

Postlude

Amen