

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: Sing to the Lord a new song.

All: We will worship God, our Maker!

One: Let us praise God with song and dance,

All: For God is gracious and loving!

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Almighty Creator, we are in awe of your greatness. You are generous in love and kindness, boundless in your goodness, power, grace, and mercy. You fill the world with truth and justice, offering people hope and new beginnings. Holy Creator, we praise and adore you.

O holy One, you walked among humanity as Jesus the Christ, fully human and fully divine. You welcome all, those who are tired and those with heavy burdens... you invite us to lay down our burdens. In silence, we confess our sins to you, God, and lay our burdens down. Creator God, when we allow our lives to become too busy we struggle to hear your voice and witness your good works in the world. Caught up in our lives, we fail to notice the people around us. We become weighed down by many tasks, heavy cares, and little distractions... we forget to go to you in prayer ... to leave all things in your care. Help us to enter into your rhythm of grace and salvation. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

The Apostle Paul challenges us to set aside all that keeps us from God and one another. Embrace the forgiveness offered in God's grace and walk in God's mercy. 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 Jesus calls us here to meet him (v 1, 3) #528

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.

Scripture¹

Tanakh*	Exodus 12:1-14	[B#58/W#64]
Psalms	Psalms 149	[B#583/W#646]
Epistle	Romans 13:8-14	[B#162/W#169]
Gospel	Matthew 18:15-20	[B# 20/W#20]

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.

The scriptures tell of the complex history and relationship between God and the people. Our faith practices encourage us to be mindful of the ways in which we attend to our relationships. We are reminded of the need to seek connection with God and with one another. The beginning of our worship service includes the assurance of pardon. In this we acknowledge our tendency to fall away from the ways of Christ and the consequence of fracturing our relationship with God. The assurance of pardon reminds us of God's loving forgiveness and the divine grace offered to each of us.

Exodus is the second book of the Bible which continues where Genesis left off. Abraham's grand-son Jacob and his family sought refuge in Egypt. Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, had risen to second in command over Egypt. The family lived in Egypt for many years. The story of Exodus begins a few hundred years later. The word "exodus" refers to Israel's exodus from Egypt. In this first part of Exodus centuries have passed and the Israelites have multiplied and filled the land.

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

The Pharaoh did not see the Israelites as a blessing. He saw the immigrants as a threat and tried to destroy them. They were enslaved and endured inhumane physical labor. Then, out of fear, the Pharaoh ordered all Israelite boys be drowned in the Nile River. God responded to their cries for help against the horrific conditions imposed by the Pharaoh. First, an Israelite mother placed her son, Moses, inside a basket in the Nile River and was rescued by the Pharaoh's household. Last week, we heard the story of the burning bush when God appeared to Moses and told him to go back to the Pharaoh to free the Israelites.

Exodus reading. This is a story of liberation that speaks to people longing for freedom. This story has helped to sustain the Jewish people through pogroms and holocausts, in death camps and exile. God brought his justice to Egypt as Pharaoh's heart hardened. The Pharaoh was confronted with plagues sent by God and, each time, Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people go. With each plague, Pharaoh's heart hardened and he became more resistant with God.

On the night before the Israelites left Egypt, they were told to sacrifice a lamb was sacrificed and paint it's blood on the doorframe of their homes. When the plague came over Egypt, the houses covered with the blood of the lamb would be "passed over" and the Israelite sons were spared. The traditional ritual of Passover began.

Rituals are important in our faith communities. They provide an anchor, a safe harbor in an ever-changing world. Rituals draw us back to our foundations and provide a method of passing truth from one generation to the next. Rituals anchor us in the past and allow us to be fully in the present as we shift into the future. It is important to remember what God has done in the past and celebrate all that God is doing now. People continue to be liberated, lives are being renewed, and hope is being restored.

I was reflecting on how the scripture readings fit within this context of our time and place, here in the 21st century as people endure conflict and instability with the persistent concerns of political polarization, wars, climate change, and economic turmoil. Conflict is inevitable in our world, in our families, and in our communities. It is important to recognize that we all make mistakes, that there are times when we behave badly, and times when we harm one another. It is in this acknowledgement that we are able to seek reconciliation.

Romans reading. One way to understand is to consider the apostle Paul's imagery of the body of Christ. Each part of the body is of great value, one is not better than the other. The church is not group that is led by the powerful, or determined by the majority; it is a fellowship of believers who have united with Jesus Christ leading. In this fellowship of believers there will be conflict, differing opinions, different visions. In the midst of the differing opinions and conflict, in the midst of the harm that will occur, we are to remember that all of the commandments can be summed up by Paul in his letter to the Romans 'Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.'²

In 1989, Mother Teresa visited Phoenix, Arizona to open a home for the destitute. During her visit, she was interviewed. The interviewer asked Mother Teresa if there was anything he could do for her. He expected a request for a contribution or media help to raise money. Instead, she said, "Yes, there is. Find somebody nobody else loves and love them." That was what occupied the mind and heart of Mother Teresa, "Find somebody nobody else loves and love them."

Matthew reading. The passage from Matthew helps us to understand how to deal with conflict. The intent is to listen and talk through whatever issues have divided or offended. The purpose is to seek reconciliation. We are to pause and reflect on how the commandment to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves might help us with disagreement and division. Conflict within the church, within our families, within our communities and the nations will occur. These ruptures disrupt the community and often result in deep hurt. The issues that led to the breakdown can become lost in the emotional responses. People may leave the church in anger and carry the burden of the relationship breakdown. Divisive actions impede the work of the church and cause harm within the community.

Jesus commands that we never to give up, never stop reaching out in love. We yearn for grace to restore what has been broken. Too often relationships end when the difficulties occur. The wounds are deep when people are abandoned in a time of need. Yet, we are told 'bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'.³ The people of the church are to prayerfully seek the will of God, to

² Romans 13:9-10

³ Matthew 18:18

heal, and to reconcile. We are reminded that within the church we are to foster the interdependence of community. We hold onto the value of rejoicing and suffering with one another.

Jesus teaches that we are to reconcile with the offending person, one on one. To reach out and speak the truth with love. When we are unable to resolve the issue, others join in the effort to seek understanding, healing, and reconciliation. This passage from Matthew has been referred to as the Rule of Christ as it describes an intervention when there is dis-unity within the community. There is an effort to reach out to the one who has stumbled. This is not to burden the offended but to offer a path for healing.

I have shared the meaning of Ubuntu with you and believe it bears repeating. Ubuntu is a South African (Zulu) philosophy that recognizes the practical aspects of inter-connection. Nelson Mandela describes Ubuntu as, "I am because we are", and, "a person is a person through other persons". Ubuntu recognizes the power of community and the interconnected nature of creation. The apostle Paul understood the church as a place of mutual interdependence, where each member is incomplete without the other, where the suffering of one is the suffering of all, and where the honor of one leads to the rejoicing of all. When conflict arises, the conflict impacts the whole community.

There are painful moments of conflict in each of our lives. Jesus assures us that there will be conflict among his followers and that such conflict can be expected. It is in our efforts to identify and resolve issues that we find healing.

During challenging times we are called to strengthen our connections with one another. In reaching out to better understand others, we better understand how God is present among us. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn He leadeth me (v 1, 2) #650

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

God calls us to show our love through the kindness we offer our neighbours. Our offering will spread the gifts God has given us to neighbours in need in the name of Christ, our Lord. 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.

Blessing of Gifts Gracious God, receive these gifts, offered in a spirit of generosity and humility. Bless and use them for the work that you long to do in the world you love for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Prayers of the People God of love, creator of heaven and earth, we are filled with gratitude for the blessings of this life. We are thankful for Christ, who redeems and guides us in our lives and for the work of the Spirit, who works in us, through us and beyond us. Holy One, we pray for this beautiful planet, the home shared with all living creatures. We lift up in prayer all who are struggling with the impact of earthquakes, fires, and floods. We pray for children and youth who worry about the future of the planet and their place in that future. We lift up those who govern locally, nationally, and across the world. May they find wisdom and courage to pursue justice for all in their decisions.

We pray for the unhoused, the hungry, the unemployed and the underemployed, for all who struggle with caring for their families. God with us, we thank you for your all-embracing love that keeps us in communion with you.

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you have taken up the cross and 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. 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. O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you experienced the loss we know when loved ones die and the pain of betrayal by friends. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who are lonely. 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 all who mourn Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Jim T; 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 for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need 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

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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 Great is thy faithfulness #324

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Go with God's love in your hearts and share that love with everyone you meet.

May God, the source of love; Christ, the face of love in action, and the Spirit, the transforming power of love, go with you, and bless you. Amen

Postlude Amen