

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD  
2023

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: God of all times & places, we gather to worship you

**All: We turn to you & rejoice in your presence**

One: God of all life & love, we gather to sing your praise.

**All: We turn to you & marvel at your power & your promise.**

One: God of all wisdom & wonder, we gather to learn from your Son.

**All: We turn our eyes toward Christ & wait for your Word to lead us.**

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON [Responsive]**

God of grace, you are the source of our lives and of all possibilities. You call us to serve in your world and inspire us to choose to have purpose that will express your goodness and mercy. Jesus has shown us many ways to serve with courage and compassion. Draw near to us in this time of worship and show us where you need us to be so that our lives may honour you. We join our voices together for the confession.

**God of mercy, you call us to love our neighbours and serve your purposes. We confess that this is easier said than done. When things get complicated, we lose patience and turn away. When we are unprepared for a challenge, we excuse ourselves from taking part. Forgive us, O God. Renew our willingness to put ourselves on the line for your love.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

God's amazing love allows each of us to receive his grace and be at peace with God, with yourselves and with each other. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**Hymn Stand up and bless the Lord [v 1, 2, 3] #411**

## To Hear The Word Of God

### Prayer For Illumination and Scripture<sup>1</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.

### Scripture<sup>2</sup>

Tanakh*	Joshua 24:1–3a, 14–25	[B#216/W#237]
Psalms	Psalms 78:1–7	[B#537/W#594]
Epistle	1 Thessalonians 4:13–18	[B#204/W#219]
Gospel	Matthew 25:1–13	[B#28 /W#28 ]

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.

How much do we remember and forget? Remembering and forgetting has been studied with a significant amount of research focussed on memory. You are likely aware that when we are exposed to new information and do not put an effort into recall ... that information will likely slip away. And, it slips away rather quickly. Research indicates that within one hour, people forget about 50% of new information. Within 24 hours, that goes to about 70%, and by the end of a week about 90% will be gone. A neuroscientist will explain that forgetting is a natural, adaptive, and desirable activity. According to research from Dr. Art Kohn it is what you do after learning new material that can help to hold the information.

When I moved a couple of years ago, a lot of time was spent sorting and purging within the home where I lived for 21 years and raised three children. Many things were given away in an effort to reduce. Over the last few years I have searched my memory and my current home for several of the items. Quite often I could picture it in my previous home. Sometimes, I was successful in the search – both memory and for the item. Other times I

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<sup>1</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

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concluded the item was long gone as part of the purge. There are times when our brain discards information. In a sense, the brain is purging the memories that are no longer relevant. Problems can arise when our brains get rid of important information.

There are many types of memory. When many of us were in elementary school the schools taught by rote ... learning by repetition. Think of the poem, Flanders Fields, as an example of learning this way. One of the ways in which we continue to remember is through repeatedly doing the same thing. It is helpful in cooking... cook the same recipe over and over and eventually it will become anchored in your memory. With a lot of practice and the use of cue cards on key chains I was able to learn ancient Greek in seminary.

Another form of memory is Anamnesis [ a·nuhm·**nee**·suhs ]. Anamnesis in medical terms refers to a review of the entire case history. In faith ... Anamnesis is a deep remembering of God's Salvation history. In our TANAKH reading, Joshua called the community leaders to the ancient shrine of Shechem on the Jordan. Joshua was speaking to "the elders, the heads, the judges and the officers of Israel" and urging them to recall the history of their relationship with God. He encouraged and challenged them to remember God and their ancestors.

We need that reminder, particularly when life seems unstable. We need to remind ourselves and others that God is present. When times get tough ... God never gives up. We need reminders that God is present in our lives and the life of creation.

Joshua gathered the people to remind them of who they were, who they belonged to, and how they got there. He called them to remember what God had done and what God was continuing to do. Joshua challenged them to recommit their lives when he said, "Choose this day whom you will serve."

The parable also asks us to choose whom we will serve as it reminds us to watch, wait, and be prepared. People were growing impatient for Jesus to return when Matthew wrote the gospel. Over the last two thousand years people have continued to grow impatient. We continue to wait, sometimes impatiently, sometimes in a distracted manner. We are distracted by worldly things such as pursuing careers and enjoying retirement without thought of having Christ as structure in our everyday lives.

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We hold the promise of his return, yet, that may slip on our priority list. We may fall into a kind of slumber, like the bridesmaids. While studying the passage I wondered how each of us might describe our sleep. Do you have good sleep hygiene...going to bed with a routine that allows you to sleep soundly? Do we prepare the evening ahead for the next morning? The parable described the foolish women sleeping without preparation. The wise women had carefully prepared by filling their lamps. They were ready, with nothing left to do but wait.

How can we understand this parable? Perhaps the filled lamps represent faith. We must care for our faith with the nurturing nature of prayer that allows us to be in connection with God. The love of Christ that guides us to serve one another and our neighbors. The study of scripture, the singing of hymns. Our memories are enriched and enhanced by the sense of connection within our faith practices, rituals, and traditions.

Jesus promised to return with love and compassion; filled with grace. Steve Molin shared, "He comes looking for the flames that flicker in the lives of those who wait."

In the midst of this challenging time with major wars, rising interest rates, increased housing costs, financial instability, the impact of COVID, and other factors many are struggling. Since the start of COVID, there has been a significant increase in the number of people suffering from anxiety and depression. This has been exasperated with several factors. People are suffering from loss, grief, and anxiety; from overwork, lack of financial stability, worries about the future; and, a lack of emotional and spiritual support. People are struggling with being overwhelmed and a sense of emptiness, many are exhausted, and they do not know where to turn. Life is experienced as chaotic and without a sound structure.

Many search for meaning as they yearn for a passionate life, a life worth living with authenticity, truth, identity, and meaning. This full life is found in our relationship with God. In this relationship you are offered his unconditional love for you as a beloved child of God. In this relationship we are equipped with the structure to be in relationship with one another.

Lori Wagner wrote, "Our relationship with God, says Jesus, is one of emotional and spiritual intimacy, filled with joy and abundance ... Our faith is our only fuel. He will do the

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rest. ... All we need to do is "be ready" –be faithful, look for him, pray to him, believe in him."

It is important to hear and remember this message of love and encouragement. We need to hear it regularly in diverse ways. We need to anchor it in our memory and live it out in our daily lives. This message of love and hope encourages us to spend time each day in prayer, opening our hearts, minds, and spirits to God.

In closing, theologian Frederick Buechner wrote, "Hope stands up to its knees in the past and keeps its eyes on the future. There has never been a time past when God wasn't with us as the strength beyond our strength, the wisdom beyond our wisdom. To remember the past is to see that we are here today by grace, that we have survived as a gift."

Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

**Hymn                    We cannot own the sunlit sky                    #717**

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

**Quote** When money rules, we remember the price of things and forget the value of things, and that is dangerous. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks-philosopher, theologian, author.

**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.

**Blessing of Gifts**

God of purpose and promise, we offer our gifts to help fulfill your purposes on earth. Bless our gifts and our actions so that others will grasp the promise of your love and discover your purpose for their lives, through Christ, our friend and saviour. Amen.

**Prayers of the People**

God of life, you open our eyes on the world you love and show us your presence and purpose. We see the wonder of your creation and the compassion you offer through friend and stranger. For these gifts we give you thanks. We pray for those who cannot recognize your gifts and find themselves lost and alone.

God of justice, you open our eyes on the world and show us struggle and conflict. We see the stressful times around us and the burdens carried by many. We pray for business owners who are struggling; for producers unsure they will receive a fair return; for workers experiencing uncertainty about their jobs or looking for new work; and, for families feeling the stress of economic uncertainty.

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God of compassion, you open our eyes on the world and show us suffering and despair. We see the challenges facing health care around the world. We pray for communities struggling with AIDS, malaria, and chronic hunger; and for those nearby facing illness, delays in treatment and uncertain outcomes. Give strength and energy to those who provide care and courage and hope to all who wait for healing.

God of wisdom, you open our eyes on this complex world. We see countries locked war and communities overwhelmed by upheaval. We pray for those displaced by conflict and natural disasters. Open the eyes and ears of leaders to the suffering and to solutions. Open our eyes to the ways in which we can participate in resolving situations which break your heart and ours.

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, in Christ you experienced the loss we know when loved ones die and the pain of betrayal by friends.

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; Lori and family; and, 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 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      Give me oil in my lamp      #655**

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

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Stay alert for signs. Watch for God's Spirit at work and invitations to share in the work of the Spirit. And may the God who made us, the Christ who mends us, and the Spirit who brings us life bless you and sustain you in every challenge and commitment. Amen.

**Postlude            Amen**