

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2024 01 21

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this third Sunday after Epiphany, January 21.

Announcements

Mission Moment

We are God's people, called to serve God with our many gifts. We belong to a denomination that is connected by faith, governance, history, and mission. Presbyterians Sharing is one of the ways that Presbyterians across Canada work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love and hope in our communities, in Canada and around the world. Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help build strong congregations, serve vulnerable people, walk with Indigenous people, seek justice, and share God's love. When we work together, we can accomplish so much more than we ever could on our own.

There are many interesting items in the printed announcements. Be sure to take a look. I will be on holiday from January 24th and will return on February 7th. Marten will lead you in worship next Sunday and Rev Elwin Garland will be here on Feb 4.

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. We make this acknowledgement, knowing it is incomplete and inadequate. May we listen, learn, and repent.

HYMN Praise God

#306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: God our rock and our salvation

All: We will not be shaken!

One: Trust in God at all times, O people

All: We will pour out our hearts to God, our refuge

One: Today, let us turn to God and accept the good news

All: We will listen for God's call and follow in the ways of Christ

Prayer of Adoration and Confession [**Responsive**]

Lord Jesus Christ, you have called us together as your people, and invited us to follow you. Your church has grown from scattered homes in ancient times – to a worldwide community, embracing people, young and old, from many nations and cultures. We marvel at the miracle of your church and praise you for our place among your people. Your love keeps drawing us to you and to each other. We offer you our wonder and praise along with millions of those who also gather in your name this day, oh Holy One. We join our voices together in our confession to you,

God of mercy & mystery, we confess your mercy can disturb us. We sit in judgment on what we hear and cannot imagine offering forgiveness for dreadful actions. We prefer to think that your judgment matches ours. Forgive us for presuming we see as you see and understand all that you understand. Have mercy upon us, O God, when we give up on the power of mercy. Amen

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 You walk along our shoreline

#753

To Hear The Word Of God Prayer For Illumination and Scripture

God of new life, your Word can change lives with mercy and purpose. 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

Tanakh*	Jonah 1:1-3, 3:1-5, 10	[B#859/W#959]
Psalms	Psalms 139:1-6	[B#576/W#639]
Gospel	John 1:43-51	[B#93 /W#95]
Gospel	Mark 1:14-20	[B#35 /W#35]

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

Diversity in discipleship

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.

At the start of each service we typically begin with giving voice to the announcements with a focus on the mission moment and events. The distributed announcements also include the weekly scripture readings and a reflection for you to consider. Last week the reflection began with asking you to consider... 'Where ... in what place ... and through whom ... you hear the call of the Lord?' ... The call of God has been evident in our readings during the season of Epiphany. The call of Jonah, Philip, Nathanael, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, and Simon and Andrew.

We heard the stories about a portion of their faith journeys. I'm always eager to hear stories of faith, in particular, how each of you have come to be here in this faith community. What helps you to trek out, particularly on blustery, snowy mornings. Or, to take the time to watch the service through social media on your device. How is it that you have devoted a portion of your time, your energy, your attention, and your financial resources to this faith community?

I have become increasingly aware of imagery that comes to mind when I read and as people share their experiences. The readings over the last few weeks remind me of a chick as it finds its way out of the egg-shell. Its entire world changes from that of being enclosed in a hard protective shell to one where it is vulnerable and must find its balance, test its legs so to speak. This image of the chick emerging from the shell connects with the ways in which God calls people. Quite often we find that our legs are a little shaky and our balance is a little off when we respond to God's call.

Some of you were introduced to your faith through your families and some through your friends. For some, faith developed through adversity and significant challenges in life. In those moments you may have discovered that it was your faith, your trust in God's presence in your life that allowed you to survive. The scriptures tell the stories of ordinary men, women, and children who became attentive to the presence of God in their lives. Ordinary people who responded to the call to live into their faith. Some responded immediately without question while others literally ran away.

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John describes Jesus as the fulfillment of the hope of Israel, of both the Law and the Prophets. Jesus will awaken faith with the people he encounters. Many of them will struggle to break down the protective shell that surrounds them in order to emerge into a new way of being. For Philip, it seems, it was simple. He heard the command to follow and he did. Phillip then shared this good news with Nathanael, who struggled to understand how the Messiah could come from an insignificant village. Philip invited Nathanael to "Come and see" the one that Moses and the prophets foretold. Nathanael was from Cana in Galilee, north east of Nazareth. In a sermon David Leininger responded to John's gospel with, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" That is just the kind of snide comment that makes me smirk. And, to be quite honest, it is one of the things that I like about our scripture — it is honest. Over and over and over again, the pages of our holy writ are littered with snide comments, unfaithful friends, ugly confrontations and some of the most unsavory "saints" that anyone could ever imagine. But God uses them. And that gives me hope because if God can use all of that hot mess, God can use even a fool like me. Hallelujah!" Leininger urges us to remember that the people in the scripture stories were ordinary people.

I wonder if you noticed that Philip responded to Nathanael's sarcastic remark with 'Come and see'. Thankfully Philip did not shy away from sharing his faith. He did not argue, or step back, or retract the invitation. Which is good because that invitation changed Nathanael's life, which in turn touched many other lives. Philip, with his joyful awareness of Jesus, invited his skeptical friend because he cared about him. A wonderful way to introduce others to faith. Many are curious about their spirituality but don't know where to start their exploration. This reading helps us to reflect on our conversations about our faith, about Jesus, and about God. We are led to important questions. How do we follow Jesus—in our work, our prayers, and in our community?

The ways in which we hear God's call varies among us. The leaders of your congregation responded to God's call and have served for many years. The session includes the minister and ruling elders. Currently there are 3 dedicated ruling elders – Brenda McLean, who also serves as the Clerk of Session; Deb Cosford, who also serves as the Presbytery Rep; and Jim Thompson, who serves as an assessor elder and liaison to the Finance and Maintenance committee. Jim Thompson had retired from Session a few years ago. He agreed to go back on Session as a Presbytery appointed 'assessor elder' during the

Prepared for Knox Presbyterian Church, Box 565, Bayfield, ON N0M 1G0

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pandemic. He has been an immense help. We meet at least 9 or 10 times a year to discuss the work of the church.

Last week the elders met on Zoom for a session meeting. During the meeting it was decided to move forward with initial steps in preparing for an elder election. The decision to call an election arises from the need to have a reasonable number of elders to share the spiritual oversight of the church. This Session would be well served by 5 or 6 elders. There are many matters that come before Session including: responsibility for establishing good order, providing for the pastoral care of the congregation, maintaining oversight of groups, the policies and procedures including the use of church buildings and property. For example, you may recall the significant discussions on inclusive policies within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. The decision to be an inclusive faith community was an important decision for your congregation.

How does all of this relate to the readings this morning? Election to the eldership is the call of God, through the congregation, for service in Christ's Church. The spiritual office of eldership consists of people who are committed Christians.

Over the next couple of months you will learn more about elder elections so you can be better prepared to nominate members and consider whether you are being called to serve as an elder. In our denomination, elders are elected for life. There is no need for experience in this role ... you may have heard this before ... God doesn't call the prepared, God prepares the called. Elders bring many gifts and they acquire an understanding of their roles within the government of the church.

The book of Jonah tells of a reluctant prophet who ran away from God's call. Initially, Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to share God's message. Instead, Jonah ran away to the sea and when a storm arose, he was thrown overboard. God sent a fish to save him and Jonah responded with thanks for his deliverance. Reluctantly, Jonah travelled to Nineveh and warned the people of coming destruction. All the people repented in the hope that God would spare the city. When God saved the city, Jonah became angry. Jonah did not make the connection between himself and Nineveh. He is one of many ordinary people who responded to the call to share their faith.

Sharing our faith occurs in many ways. You may be familiar with St Francis of Assisi. He was born into a life of privilege in 1181 in Italy. After his epiphany, he devoted his efforts to a life of prayer and to providing care for lepers. He had a deep love of nature and

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animals and became the patron saint of the environment and animals. He is well known for many prayers and quotes. You may be familiar with, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and, suddenly you are doing the impossible." Another is, "Do all you can to preach the gospel and if necessary use words!"

One day Francis invited a young monk to join him on a trip into town to preach. The young monk was honored and quickly accepted. All day long he and Francis walked through the streets and alleys encountering hundreds of people. At the end of the day, the two headed back home. Not once had Francis addressed a crowd or talked to anyone about the gospel. The young monk was disappointed and said to him, "I thought we were going into town to preach?" Francis responded, "My son, we have preached. We were preaching while we were walking. We were seen by many and our behavior was closely watched. It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!"

Francis of Assisi helps us to remember that living into our faith is demonstrated in the ways in which we live. It is in the ordinary everyday that our faith is shared. It is in the walking and the sharing that takes place with others. We are ordinary people who respond to the call to live into our faith. When you contribute to sharing news of the efforts of this congregation, when you bring food in for the FoodBank, when you bring in used stamps and eyeglasses, old milk bags, egg cartons, literature and old books... you touch the lives of those in need. Each time you bring food to share in a potluck, you help to build fellowship within this faith community. When you attend meetings and share your gifts of experience and knowledge, when you step up to become engaged in the issues of the day, and when you support others who do so. In many, many ways you demonstrate your faith when you engage your neighbour and the stranger with loving kindness. Be attentive to the ways in which you experience the spirit of God in your life and the many ways in which you share your faith. In closing, I would like to share a prayer inspired by Francis of Assisi. Join with me in prayer...

"Lord, make each of us gathered here today an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love, where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and, where there is sadness, joy. O Divine and loving God, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved, as to love." Amen.

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Hymn **Follow me, the Master said** **#645**

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Christian stewardship is discipleship: it's how we live our lives in response to God's bounteous grace. Marcia Shetler

Jesus asked his first disciples to answer his call with their lives. We offer the fruit of our lives in answer to this same call. Consider what Christ can accomplish through the gifts you offer today.

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

Lord Jesus, you called ordinary men and women join in the work of God's reign on earth. We offer you our gifts to share in the work you began through them. Bless our gifts and work through us, that the world may know your love is still active among us all. Amen.

Prayers of the People

O holy and awesome God of fishers, farmers, and factory workers; God of those who work in health care, business, and at home; God of those who work in our schools, as entertainers, and elsewhere; we thank you for the many ways we can serve your purpose. We thank you for all the ways that goodness is offered to sustain lives and support our community.

God of purpose and promise, Jesus called his followers and so they did. Today we pray for those whose work has changed without their choice: those who have lost their jobs, those whose business are in jeopardy, and those who face increased demands at work with less support. May they find courage and perseverance in their faith as the future unfolds.

God, we thank you for the fellowship we share and the gifts of the Spirit we receive. We pray that the differences between us will enrich our witness to Jesus and the love he proclaims. Teach us to value diversity in discipleship and to honour all that unites us. May the world see Jesus reflected in all our lives.

God of our communities and cultures shape our identities for your created us to be in relationship. We thank you for the enjoyment and support that we find by coming together.

God of all times and situations, we bear on our hearts concern for those who find their challenges to be overwhelming. Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you

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know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Renee & Jim; 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 Open my eyes, that I may see #500

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

The season of Epiphany celebrates God's light breaking into the world in Christ Jesus. May the light of God lead you, the light of Christ embrace you, and the light of the Holy Spirit enliven you so that you know hope and peace this day and forever more.

Postlude Amen