

2024 02 18

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this first Sunday of Lent February 18th.

Announcements

We extend a warm welcome and thanks to Peter Postill for sharing his vocal talents with us.

Mission Moment

In northern Ghana, 2 year-old Moriama faced social stigma due to a congenital deformity linked to hydrocephalus. She received specialized care and support from a community rehabilitation program at the Garu Presbyterian Health Centre. The staff at Garu also worked with Moriama's community to address the stigma she had been facing. Moriama's mother expressed her profound gratitude: "I am immensely thankful to the CBR program and PWS&D for coming to our aid." The donations from this congregation help support programs like the Garu Presbyterian health centre.

Your generous offerings also help the local foodbank. The foodbank continues to need items for school lunches, plus peanut butter, cereals, soups, crackers, beans, pasta, and canned fruit. I appreciate the emails, notes, and phone calls that many of you offer. It is always helpful to hear from you. I would rather have the news repeated to me 10 x from different people than not at all.

This week I received information about the Huron County Food Distribution Centre. They reported a new record of food distribution in Huron County. Distribution Centre General Manager, Mary Ellen Zielman reported, "We sent out over a million pounds of food last year. That's basically doubled from just a few years ago." The Distribution Centre sources and delivers food to Huron County's food banks and aid agencies. Food bank usage had 21,300 visits plus 7,300 visits to the mobile food banks. A few years ago, HCFDC spent \$15,000 a month on food. Now they spend \$35,000 a month. At the North Huron Food Share in Wingham the monthly food budget is now more than \$17,000 each month.

Gordon Franklin, General Manager of Seaforth's Food Bank, reported "Last year we spent \$60,000 (for the entire year). In 2022, it was \$47,000." Local FoodBanks are in need of donations.

I have a question for you... what happens three weeks from today? I'll give you a clue – it will be Sunday March 10th. ... Another clue? Several events will occur on that day. First, the clocks will 'spring ahead' by an hour. Then our worship will include the annual

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congregational meeting, which starts at 11:30. And, following the meeting we will share in a congregational lunch. I'm hoping there will be an afternoon nap later that afternoon ... me at least.

The 2021 General Assembly enacted changes to the PCC's theology and practice regarding marriage and ordination with a set of recommendations to guide the whole church to acknowledge the harm caused due to homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism and hypocrisy, to respond appropriately to that harm and to ensure that harm does not continue. An upcoming webinar will provide an opportunity to review and learn more about the decisions the church has made regarding LGBTQI2+ inclusion through a short presentation about the church's decisions. There will be a time for participants to ask questions. The webinar will take place on Wednesday March 13th and will be recorded.

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: We are beginning our journey through Lent.

All: God is with us on the way.

One: We come to find light in the shadows and strength in our weakness.

All: We will remember God's faithfulness.

One: We seek God's truth & mercy day by day.

All: We trust in God's steadfast love as we worship with grateful hearts!

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

Good and gracious God, creator of earth and sky, maker of rainbows and raindrops, we praise you for the beauty of the world us, and for the hope of life with you now and always. We praise you for your faithfulness and loving kindness throughout all generations, for your promise of grace, for your compassion and redemption revealed to

us in Christ Jesus. Receive our prayers and praise this day as we learn to live by your love.

Wise and Merciful God, your covenant with us was made in faithfulness. We confess that we grow tired & restless when things don't go our way. We lose patience with others. We lack compassion when others are in need & we forget to express love for those closest to us. We seek your forgiveness. Help us to be prisms of your love, with the light of Christ light shining through us. 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 Will you come and follow me #634

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

Tanakh*	Genesis 9:8-17	[B#7 / W#8]
Psalms	Psalms 25:1-10	[B#502 / W#554]
Epistle	1 Peter 3:18-22	[B#234 / W#252]
Gospel	Mark 1:9-15	[B#34 / W#35]

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.

We have begun the journey of the Lent, which began on Feb. 14 and runs through to March 28th. The 40 days of Lent will move into Good Friday and Easter Sunday on March 31st. This is a time to intentionally explore meaning within our actions, our relationships, our faith. Henri Nouwen offers, "Our true challenge is to return to the center, to the heart, and to find there the gentle voice which speaks to us and affirms us in a way no human

voice ever could. The basis of all ministry is the experience of God's unlimited and unlimiting acceptance of us as beloved children, an acceptance so full, so total and all-embracing, that it sets us free from our compulsion to be seen, praised, and admired and free for Christ who leads us on the road to service."

We begin in the book of Genesis. In chapter 1, "God saw that it was good" Now in chapter 6, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become." The separation of the waters above and the waters below would collapse into a great flood. God commanded the dry ground to appear and then to disappear into the rising waters. Again the Spirit blew over the earth and creation emerged as the waters receded. Then, God made a covenant to not destroy the world again this way. Baker's commentary notes, "We are perhaps surprised to read that the bow is in the sky for God's benefit—"Whenever . . . the rainbow appears . . . I will remember." Perhaps there is a play here on the verbs "see" and "remember." The flood story began with God "seeing" the unrestrained evil in the world. It ends with God "seeing" the rainbow."

In the gospels we follow Jesus into the wilderness which will lead to another new beginning. Our readings provide insight into the link between the divine and human. On this first Sunday of Lent Mark's gospel draws our attention to major events in a very brief passage. With succinct brevity we are told of the baptism of Jesus and his time in the wilderness. Jesus entered the wilderness and emerged proclaiming the kingdom of God is near. Noah and his family emerged from the flood, from the midst of the worst chaos, to know that God's promise and love would be visible in the rainbow. These significant events altered humanity's understanding of God and of themselves.

These passages help us to recognize that we can live with the faithful promises of God. The promise of relationship with all of creation and the promise of new beginnings. We are invited to re-consider our relationships with God, each other and all creation.

It is good to linger in this passage. To linger with the description of the Spirit. In the gospels we discover the Spirit descending as a dove as the heavens open. The chaos of life is packed into this short verse. Jesus moved from his baptism to 40 days with the wild beasts, where angels waited on him and he was tempted by Satan.

Each reading of the scripture passage can provide insight. It is helpful to linger on a word or phrase. Experience can shift our understanding of most things in life. Mark describes, 'The Spirit as a dove descended upon him.' Consider the interpretive influence of art and

music. The impact of how others experience the passage. Jesus rising out of the Jordan, water flowing from his body back into the river, as the heavens are torn apart and the Spirit descended like a dove. The contrast of the heavens being torn with the image of a small bird descending. The voice from heaven laying claim to Jesus. Then, the Spirit that had descended like a dove, immediately drove him into the wilderness.

In her sermon on Lent, Beth Quick wrote, "In our hurried world, I don't want us to rush through these forty days. We are always rushing through things as it is – we're always always counting down to something else, counting the days until birthdays, until payday, until school is out, or until vacation – we're always biding our time until something else happens. I hate to do that with Lent too – just count down until Easter, and waste the time we have, miss the opportunity for digging deeper spiritually, skipping over the process of looking inside of ourselves, trying to remake ourselves, letting ourselves be remade by God." Quick finished with, "I want more from Lent, for all of us, and I want more from Mark on this time in Jesus' life, this time where we can see the human Jesus, struggling to make right choices, just like we do."

This is a time of change, of spiritual reflection, of temptation, and new insight. This is a time to recognize that spiritual practices ... actually take practice. In the spiritual practice of prayer we place our trust and hope in our relationship between God and us. Some find it helpful to link prayer with existing routines. Have you considered combining a morning routine with prayer. It is wonderful to start a day with prayer and good cup of coffee. Many find it helpful to pray at specific times. Others prefer to connect each part of their day with prayer, such as with each meal. A prayer of gratitude might include thanksgiving for food, housing, and relationships. A gratitude journal is a way to be mindful of your ongoing appreciations offered in prayer. The practice of prayer creates an intentional connection with the divine that can open up our ability to sense God's presence in our lives. Prayer can help us to be open to the movement of the Spirit and the ways in which God is leading us.

In Lent, we follow Jesus into the wilderness. We follow his forty days in the desert with our own forty days of Lent. When the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness Jesus did not try to avoid it. He did not try to evade the Spirit. Jesus willingly followed the path set out for him. The wilderness is a spiritual place for intentional self-examination. Amy-Jill Levine wrote, "During Lent you have the opportunity to think about your life alongside the life of

Jesus, inviting inward transformation and then outward action." Lent is a time to intentionally explore meaning within our actions, our relationships, our faith. Jesus left distractions of the predictable behind. He faced challenges to his identity and defined the course of the journey which would follow. How will you journey through this season of Lent? Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Special Music HE Soloist Peter Postill

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Stewardship is the way we love God and neighbor with our whole lives, not just our wallets. *Charles Lane and Grace Pomroy – authors*

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 courage and compassion, we ask your blessing on our offerings. May these gifts offer hope in these challenging times. Amen.

Special Music It is no secret (what God can do) Soloist – Peter Postill

Prayers of the People

Holy and gracious God, as we enter this holy season we give you thanks. We are thankful for your promise of new life that sustains and encourages us when times are difficult. We thank you ... for glimmers of hope, particularly on a bleak landscape and on challenging days ... for glimpses of beauty in a smile and a ray of sunshine ... for the people who support others in difficult times ... for the chance to recover from mistakes and the opportunity to begin again.

Trusting your promise of new life, it is with hope that we pray:

for those we have harmed with harsh words and careless deeds;

for those who are carrying heavy burdens;

for troubled places in our world and those who work for peace and reconciliation;

and, for churches seeking new ways to minister to people in changing times.

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. 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; Courtney, Gayle &

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. Holy God, renew our hope and our desire to live with the courage and compassion of Christ, as we pray together the words he taught us: 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

Arise, your light has come

#712

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

As we begin our journey through the season of Lent, remember the words of the prophet Micah: What does the Lord require of us? To do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. May God's loving kindness comfort you, may God's justice inspire you, and may Jesus walk beside you this day and forever more. Amen.

Postlude

Amen