

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on June 16<sup>th</sup> Happy Father's day to all who have fathered and cared for children in your lives.

### **Announcements**

Everyone is invited to attend the celebration of life for John Talbot on Sunday June 23 from 2- 4 pm. At the Talbot homestead 33832 Edgerton Rd. The officiant will be Floyd Hermann, a close family friend.

**Mission Moment** ... Following a political crisis in the Sudan in 2023, Am Salama and her family, once prosperous farmers and restaurant owners, were forced to flee East Darfur due to escalating tensions. The war separated Am Salama from her husband, who stayed behind to care for his blind mother. Facing numerous challenges during their journey to South Sudan, including being robbed of their few belongings plus frequent illness, they found refuge at the Wedwil Refugee Camp. The safety and food assistance they received at the camp, supported by PWS&D, played a critical role in their survival.

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: It is good to give God thanks, to sing praises to the Most High!

**All: We will sing for joy to God**

One: Let us declare God's steadfast love in the morning

**All: and God's faithfulness by night**

One: So, come to worship God with thankful hearts!

**All: Let us praise God's holy name together.**

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

Living God, you provide vitality, love and joy. Your peace is our companion, your love is our strength, your Son is our hope. Your Spirit nurtures tiny seeds of purpose and potential, hidden deep in the soil of life, to surprise us with new life. As the earth blooms around us, we bring you our prayers and praise, trusting that your Spirit will renew the gifts we need to serve you in faithfulness. We join our voices together ... **Living, loving God, as we watch our gardens grow, we confess we often resist the change growth can bring. We form opinions about many things – and cling to them. We fear new insights and new directions. Forgive us when we think we already know enough. Grant us faith like the mustard seed, able to grow with your blessing to become a mighty sign of your lively kingdom among 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 God is love come heaven adoring #314**

**To Hear The Word Of God**

**Prayer For Illumination and Scripture**

God of truth and wisdom, Jesus confronted those who stood against him as your Truth. Send us your Holy Spirit to hear your truth again in his story. Inspire us with his courage and conviction so that we may love you more fully and serve you with wisdom. Amen.

**Scripture**

Tanakh*	1Samuel 15:34–16:13	[B#259/W#288]
Psalms	Psalms 20	[B#499/W#551]
Epistle	2 Corinthians 5:6–17	[B#181/W#190]
Gospel	Mark 4:26–34	[B#38 /W#39 ]

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.

Stories are able to capture our imagination in wonderful ways. Stories help us to understand the context of our individual and communal lives. For example, the story of Father's Day goes back to a simple request to a minister. It was on a Sunday morning in May of 1909, when a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd was in a church in Spokane, Washington, listening to a Mother's Day sermon. When she thought of her father who had raised her and her siblings after her mother died ... she thought that fathers should get recognition, too. So she asked the minister of the church if he would deliver a sermon honoring fathers on her father's birthday, which was coming up in June, and the minister did. And the tradition of Father's Day caught on, though rather slowly. This is a day when many reach out to their fathers, if they are able, to reconnect. There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father searched for months. Finally, desperate to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father. On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers. Stories capture our imaginations and help us to understand life in new ways.

Parables capture our imagination. Untangling a parable can help us to see what initially is not apparent. It may take a few moments or a lifetime of reflection to discern the message. The parables can be puzzling, like riddles are puzzling.

Steven Molin wrote about a riddle shared by a youth director who then left town on a camping trip without telling the answer. He did say ... "only 17% of Stanford graduates figured out this riddle, but 80% of kindergarteners knew the answer."

So, the riddle:

“What is stronger than God, more evil than the devil, poor people have it, rich people don’t need it, and if you eat it, you’ll die?” (Repeat)

You don’t need to wait till next week ... I will share the answer a bit later.

Parables leave the listener trying to figure out the meaning. Jesus told more than 40 parables during his ministry. 2000 years later we continue to ponder them.

Marcel Danesi, a professor of semiotics – the study of signs and symbols - at the University of Toronto, has written a book on puzzles. During an interview on the popularity of puzzles in the pandemic, Danesi noted, “There is always a sense of chaos within us, due probably to the fact that life is so unpredictable. Life is a puzzle with no answers. Puzzles do have answers and reaching them provides a kind of instant and temporary relief from the angst. They restore order to the chaos in our minds. Henry Dudeney, a great puzzle-maker, put it this way: “Every good puzzle, like virtue, is its own reward.” Danesi explained that when you concentrate on doing a puzzle it can provide a temporary retreat from the problems of the world. Studies indicate that puzzles may contribute to increased cognitive functioning and more effective regulation of distressing emotions.”

Puzzles, it seems, serve an important purpose in our lives. Cardboard puzzles remind us that we don’t see how different pieces fit together until we get a view from a different perspective.

In our reading this morning, Samuel seemed to struggle with understanding how the pieces of his life fit together. He was a prophet and a judge who was called to seek the first and then the second king. In today’s reading he was grieving the coming loss of King Saul who had disobeyed God's command. God told the grieving Samuel to travel to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the new king to replace Saul. God met Samuel in his grief and set him on the path to heal the damage done by Saul.

Samuel met with Eliab, then considered six of Jesse’s seven sons to determine if they were appropriate as a king. When we read the story we discovered that Samuel was distracted by their obvious signs of leadership, yet none of those were

chosen. God instructed Samuel to continue the search. It would be the youngest, a shepherd, the least expected who would be chosen as the unlikely king of Israel. It was Jesse's son David. This passage reminds us that God calls unlikely people to service and empowers them to accomplish their purpose. God walked with David, as God walked with Samuel, as God promises to walk with us ... correcting us, forgiving us, protecting us, and directing us. There are many examples of unlikely leaders chosen by God. Moses, the reluctant prophet, Jacob who received Esau's blessing, and the young Joseph who became a powerful ruler over his extended family. Many church leaders and ministers have doubted their abilities when they sensed God's call. God chooses whom God chooses. The choosing and giving of the Spirit are not based on human knowledge. God's criteria are not human criteria: "the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart". Both Samuel and David, flawed humans, were empowered with the Spirit of God, when the time was right. Timing of God's choosing can be difficult for us to accept.

In the middle ages, Martin Luther struggled with his calling to ministry and spoke to the his acceptance of God's will when he crafted sermons, "After I preach my sermon on Sunday, when I return home, I drink my little glass of Wittenberg beer and I just let the gospel run its course." E F Markquart wrote, "Luther said that after he pounded on the pulpit and expounded the gospel, he would go home and pull out the Sunday newspaper, and pull out his glass of warm Wittenberg beer and start to drink it and enjoy the afternoon. Luther knew that the power of his sermon was not based on the power of his theological acuity. He knew that the power of his sermon was not based on his eloquence or his abilities. He knew that the power of the sermon would have no effect whatsoever unless the very Word of God got into a person's heart. Luther knew that he couldn't do that. It was the Holy Spirit who did that. Luther keenly understood the power of the Word." He discovered this power in the scriptures, in the teachings from Christ.

The parables shift our understanding of how we see ourselves and the ways in which we encounter God and one another. Sometimes the shift is tiny. Sometimes it is our entire worldview that shifts. These parables of the soil are designed to take the familiar and show something new. The first parable provides a metaphor of a gardener who slept through the growing season but wakes up in time for the harvest. Then, the parable of a mustard seed ... described as the smallest of seeds – which it is not, and that it will grow into a large bush – which it will not, for birds to find shelter in. We have become very aware of what happens when birds make nests in bushes. Did you notice the bird nesting in the cedar at the front of the church? You may have found it necessary to re-evaluate your path into the church this morning because of this bird nesting in the cedar at the steps. The bird is very effective at getting our attention, to startle us. The parables this morning were intended to grab the listeners attention and to shift perspectives.

Paul Rader, in *Devotion to Parables*, wrote “The details in the parable of the mustard seed are skewed. We might not notice, not being Palestinian farmers, but those who heard Jesus tell this parable sure did. Mustard seeds are not the smallest seeds. They are tiny, but they are not the smallest by a great deal. And they do not grow to become the largest of all garden plants. In fact, it isn’t a garden plant at all: it’s a weed. ... And there isn’t a farmer ... that wants birds perched in a bush ... when new seeds were in the ground. Those who heard Jesus tell this parable knew something was up! He knew what mustard was. He knew and they knew. What could his distortion of the mustard, as a seed and as a plant, mean?” Perhaps Jesus was speaking to the seeds of faith that would take root and grow in new, unfamiliar ways. Seeds that would sprout and become life-giving and nurturing to living creatures.

And back to the riddle. “What is stronger than God, more evil than the devil, poor people have it, rich people don’t need it, and if you eat it, you’ll die?” (Repeat)  
The answer is: “Nothing.”

Literally, the word parable means "a riddle." They are stories that leave the listener with the responsibility of figuring out just what they mean. Jesus told more than 40 parables during his ministry. So 2000 years later, we continue to ponder the parables. Like the tiny mustard seed, the parables allow us to grow when our imaginations are stirred in new, wondrous, and confusing ways. The image of the seed is repeated in the gospels of Mark and John, in the book of Ezekiel, and Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The parable of the scattered seed helps us to see glimmers of the mystery of God's grace. We are encouraged to keep our imaginations open to the Divine mystery that seems just beyond our grasp. This means we must loosen our grip on the familiar ways of being and embrace the new possibilities that rise up in our path. Our cardboard puzzles may be easy to solve because we see the entire picture along with the pieces. With the Spirit's guidance the scriptures provide a glimpse into God's creation and our purpose within it. In the parables, Jesus invites us to join in this new way of being in the world.

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

**Hymn                      Lord of all power                      #626**

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

**Quote**                      Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. (1 Peter 4:10)

The parables shared by the gospel of Mark remind us that God's kingdom grows from small beginnings with surprising results. Give to God as you are able, and trust that God will honour your generosity for the purposes of God's Spirit at work among us and beyond us.

**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 small seeds and secret growth, bless the gifts we bring to you. Use them as seeds of new life in our community and in your world. Grow results we cannot

even imagine – within us, among us, because of us and beyond us, for the sake of Christ, our Living God. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People**

Gracious God, you hold all things in your hands. We plant seeds and it is your mysterious power that brings forth growth. Thank you for our sense of purpose within life. Guide our plans for ministry in the days ahead. May we bear the fruits of new life with the seeds planted within us and our community.

We pray for the work of our church and our government in pursuing Truth and Reconciliation with Canada's indigenous peoples. We pray for indigenous communities where there is a lack of clean water to drink and health care. We pray for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and all who mourn their loss. May your Spirit guide decision makers to act with timely courage and compassion for justice to be done. Awaken understanding in those who lack empathy for the struggles of others.

On this day that celebrates fathers, we pray for families in war-torn communities where celebration is an impossible dream. We pray for fathers and families who face financial hardship and worry for the well-being of their children. And we pray for all who feel empty or lonely this day, who fear the future or mourn the past. As summer holidays draw closer, guide families to find meaningful opportunities for fellowship and peace within your creation. Gracious God, you hold all things in your hand, including us. Be with all who carry on in spite of loss or grief, and with those who face pain or uncertainty about their future. Keep us open to your Spirit's leading.

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. Draw near to those who must confront illness, loss, and changing circumstances. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering.



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God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief and your Spirit to linger with Jim, Jane and family as they mourn Valerie; with Brenda, Faye and family as they mourn John; and with friends and family as they mourn the loss of Marjorie. May their shared memories be a blessing. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Renee & Jim; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; David & Sharon; Courtney, Gayle & family; John, Brian, & family; David and family. O holy One, guide the caregivers and medical staff in their efforts to bring healing. 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'd 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                                      This is my Father's world                                      #328**

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

Walk gently on the earth God has entrusted to us all and cherish God's amazing creation. Deep peace of the running wave to you, Deep peace of the flowing air to you, Deep peace of the quiet earth to you, Deep peace of the shining stars to you. Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you. Amen.

**Postlude                                      Amen**