

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2024 08 25

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this last Sunday of August.

Announcements

It is good to welcome back our guest flautist, Jan Searle. Thank you for sharing your musical gifts with us today.

Mission Moment

In Malawi, the *Mabiri Community Day Secondary School's Sexual Reproductive Health Club* is part of the *Every Girl Empowered Project*, which is supported by PWS&D. A major issue is the school dropout rates created by an inability to pay school fees. The club members identified a peer, Wezzie, who was struggling financially. To help her, they organized an open house event, inviting supporters to hear her story. Through their advocacy efforts, the club raised pledges to cover Wezzie's school fees. She then successfully passed her examinations.

Pieter ... update

Next Sunday, Heather Robinson will lead worship and then on Sept 8 the Rev Theresa McDonald-Lee will join you.

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 hears our cries and rescues us from trouble

All: Let us praise God's holy name

One: God draws near the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit

All: Let us worship the One brings new life and praise God's holy name forever.

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

Majestic, mysterious God we come before you in wonder and gratitude. You are the source of all that is. You God are beyond our imagining. Your creation astounds us with beauty and power. You embrace us with tender care, drawing near in every situation with

healing and hope. Receive our praise and prayer this day, Source, Word, and Spirit of Life, ever Three and ever One. We join our voices together ...

God of mercy, we confess our choices are often made with no thought of you. We seek forgiveness for harming others, ignoring our wellbeing, and betraying your love. Guide us in all our choices, simple or complicated, so we express our faithfulness to you day by day.

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus said, "Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". Friends, trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gifts to you this day. Be renewed by the power of the Spirit that moves with you into each new day. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Special Music

Jan Searle, Flautist

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

Psalm	Psalm 84	[B#543/W#600]
Epistle	Ephesians 6:10-20	[B#195/W#208]
Gospel	John 6:56-69	[B#98 /W#102]

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

Special Music

Jan Searle, Flautist

Message

Guide us by your Word and Spirit this day, so that we may gain wisdom from the Scriptures, and be moved to follow Jesus more close for he is your Living Word. 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.

When we are nurtured in a faithful community, the roots of our common faith grow deep in its rich soil. It is vital to seek an understanding of the many ways in which the teachings of Christ impact our lives. Poet Maya Angelou shares the ways in which her faith was formed, including memories of her grandmother: her wisdom, her stature and her faith. She recalled her grandmother would clasp her hands behind her back, look up into the distant sky and say, "I will step out on the word of God." The great depression was a

difficult time for everyone, but "especially so for a single black woman in the South tending her crippled son and two grandchildren." When her grandmother was dealing with mountainous burdens, she would face the sky and say, "I will step out on the word of God." And she would look up as if she could will herself into the heavens". Maya grew up knowing that the word of God had power. Whenever she experiences the injustices of this world, Maya remembers the great faith of her grandmother. God gives us spiritual armor to protect us from the evil we face: God provides us with truth, righteousness, the willingness to speak up for Christ, and, most importantly, faith.

When we are nurtured in a faithful community, the roots of our common faith grow deep. It is vital to seek an understanding of the many ways in which the teachings of Christ are counter-cultural. It is necessary to wrestle with the stories to uncover the deeper teachings. The imagery in the readings today may be disturbing, at the very least - confusing. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the armour of Christ as an important part of the Christian identity. It does not make sense to imagine Christ with military armour. The armor of Christ speaks to the necessity of unmasking that which is against the goodness of God's creation. Digging into the truth of situations, exposing the harm done through the use of violence to control and oppress. The harm done by fatalism, addiction, genocide, isolation, hunger, racism, and human trafficking. When we put on the armour of Christ and follow in his teachings we see the world more clearly.

John Ortberg shared an incident involving Desmond Tutu when a political rally opposed to apartheid was cancelled by the South African government. Desmond Tutu led a worship service in St. George's Cathedral. The walls were lined with soldiers and riot police carrying guns and bayonets, ready to close it down. Bishop Tutu began to speak of the evils of the apartheid system -- how the rulers and authorities that propped it up were doomed to fail. He pointed a finger at the police who were there to record his words: "You may be powerful -- very powerful -- but you are not God. God cannot be mocked. You have already lost." Then, in a moment of unbearable tension, the bishop seemed to soften. Coming out from behind the pulpit, he flashed that radiant Tutu smile and began to bounce up and down with glee. "Therefore, since you have already lost, we are inviting you to join the winning side." The crowd roared, the police melted away and the people began to dance. Don't go away, the apostle Paul says. Put on your armor and dance. I am inviting you to join the winning side."

The imagery in the gospel of John confused the disciples and they responded with, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" Jesus taught that "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." The bread that he offered was greater than the manna that sustained their ancestors in the desert. The bread that he offers will provide eternal life. This passage brings to mind the story of the Samaritan woman at the well where Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty." Jesus used familiar symbols of bread, wine, flesh, blood, and water to help us to grasp this gift of life. He is speaking of eternal life—not immortality. Eternal life allows us to resist the fear of death as we discover a life worth living with purpose and joy.

William Willimon wrote " The reason this passage is so tough is that we are modern people who live in flattened, cause-effect worlds full of data and facts. We simply may not have the intellectual imagination to deal with words and images like those Jesus serves up today." Thomas Yorty commented, "Willimon is on to something. We do live in a flattened 9 to 5 world. Force life into bite sized data, facts, time-frames. Translate our joy and sorrow into tidy cause and effect formulas. When something terrible happens how often have you heard someone say or said yourself, there must be a reason. Being able to clutch onto reasons gives us the illusion of control, security, and power. "

Fear may be a barrier that prevents us from grasping that Christ provides the gifts of spirit and life. Fear can be powerful. When life becomes chaotic, when circumstances seem to spin out of control, when we are overwhelmed, many seek a sense of control. It is in those moments that control can actually be relinquished. In the moments that we choose to abide in Christ and he in us—we give up the notion that we are in control. Fear will dissipate and no longer have any power. We turn our concerns over to God, trusting that we are loved and cared for. We can accept the love of God then the Spirit is able to flow from us and through us.

In our faith we gather, in part, to recognize and acknowledge the importance of being in community. Each of you as individuals are strengthened by your willingness to be part of this community. This congregation gathers to build up their relationships with God and with one another. In following the ways and teachings of Christ, you are nurtured within God's creation. Your efforts to help others in the world are magnified and strengthened - together.

In closing, Charles Leary shared an interesting story. A church member, Alex, had been active for many years and recently stopped attending. One cold winter evening the pastor knocked at his door. As they watched the wood burn in the fireplace, the minister mentioned the man's absence from church. Alex confessed that he had decided he was just as well off without the church as with it. The minister didn't say a word. He took the fire tongs from the rack, reached into the fire, pulled out a flaming ember, and laid it down by itself on the hearth. Both men sat in silence and watched the single glowing ember lose its glow and turn slowly into a crusty, black lump. After some moments of thoughtful silence, Alex turned to his pastor and said, "I get the message, my friend, I see what you mean; I'll be back next Sunday." And he was.

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

Hymn Open my eyes, that I may see #500

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you. It's what you leave behind you when you go. Randy Travis, musician

As summer stretches on, we begin to see the fruit of our labours in field and garden, produce of God's good creation. Yet we know many fields and gardens are under great stress due to floods and fires, economic stressors, and armed conflicts. So we bring what we have to share, praying that God's generosity will multiply the fruit of our lives to support those whose summer has been less fruitful.

Special Music Jan Searle, Flautist

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 growth and goodness, we offer what we have to share, knowing that others are in need and worry for the future. Bless our gifts and use them to spread seeds of hope and wellbeing among those who live with uncertainty, for the sake of Christ, the Bread of Life.

Prayers of the People

O holy God in whom we live and move and have our being. We are aware of the many challenges in our lives, in the lives of those we care about, and in the world around us. God, your world is filled with your goodness. All nature sings your praise. We give you thanks for the stillness of night and the rest it brings, and for days filled with energy and creativity. Thank you for summer with its changing rhythms that renew us. We thank you,

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too, for new opportunities you create among us, and for new relationships that enrich our lives. We are thankful for your faithfulness. Guide us to take action with our concern for each other and for your creation.

You hold the future in your hands, O God, and so we put our trust in your guidance for these changing times. We pray for those who work on the seas and in the fields, providing food the world needs. We pray for those who face new beginnings: those starting at school, in training programs, new jobs and activities, and for those welcoming new family members.

Help us see where you call us to reach out with your love and generosity. Renew our faith and our friendships in Christ. Equip us to meet the challenges we face with hearts full of faith & commitment.

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.

God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief and your Spirit to linger with Brian and family as they mourn their son, Brian; and with Jim, Jane and family as they mourn Valerie. 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 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'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

Stand up and bless the Lord

#411

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

May the Christ who walked on wounded feet walk with you on the road. May the Christ who served with wounded hands stretch out your hands to serve. May the Christ who

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loved with a wounded heart open your heart to love. May we see the face of Christ in everyone we meet. May everyone we meet see the face of Christ in us. May the God who made us, the Christ who mends us, and the Spirit who gives us life bless you with peace and purpose forever more. Amen.

Postlude **Amen**

Special Music **Jan Searle, Flautist**