

➤ ***O let the power fall on me***

Call to Worship

Breathe upon us, Holy Spirit, and inspire our thoughts and actions.

Stir in our hearts, Holy Spirit, and fill us with energy to spread joy in the world.

Strengthen us, Holy Spirit, and move us to bring hope to those in despair.

Breathe in us, Holy Spirit, as we listen for God's call in worship today.

The God of compassion calls us to share.

The God of understanding calls us to reach out.

The God of justice calls us to act.

We hear God's call.

In a world that teaches hatred, selfishness, and injustice,

God calls us to holy work – to divine love, compassion, and justice.

We hear and answer God's call as we worship and witness to God's coming reign!

Prayer

We come to this time of worship O God, seeking you, seeking your presence, seeking your peace. May we sense your presence with us now. ***Revive us again, we pray.***

Parent of all people, you created us to inhabit your world – to dwell together as family – to worship you in word and deed – we come seeking you in thankfulness.

We confess to inequities in humanity's living arrangements. While some reside in splendour, others sleep in streets. While some install security systems, others cannot escape the terrible violence and insecurity that surrounds them. We acknowledge injustices, and we admit as well that our planetary housekeeping has been so shoddy it endangers us all. ***Forgive us we pray.***

We confess to actions that fragment the family or that cause it stress. Sometimes, in our dealings with one another, we let ethnic or racial or religious differences blind us to our essential unity. Often, we practice unconcern or coercion more ably than we do caring or acceptance. ***Forgive us we pray.***

We confess to neglecting our spiritual health and to avoiding participation in forms of service that our faith commends. Our attention to your Word and will has been deficient. ***Forgive us we pray.***

Help us to become better keepers of the earth, more compassionate members of the human family, and more dedicated people of faith. Hear our prayers, O Lord, and help us in bringing your answers to a world in need as we pray together in Jesus' name...

***Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,***

*Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen*

Words of Hope

Our God moves with power and grace in our lives – forgiving and freeing us – loving us always. Thanks and praise to our gracious God.

➤ *Lord, speak to me*

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Scripture and Message

Spirit of God, at Pentecost you moved among the gathered disciples to create new understanding. We ask you to move among us today and fill us with a fresh understanding of scripture. Energize us to act on this holy wisdom faithfully, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Living Word. **Amen**

A few weeks ago, while visiting with friends – in their yard observing appropriate physical distance of course – one person asked what my favourite scripture was. I know – weird friends, right? Actually, I think it may have all originated in a conversation about one of them planning a hopefully far into the future funeral with a parent who was clear about their scripture choices. Anyway – we talked about our favourites and why they were meaningful to us. We even had some in common. It made me think that we should talk about it together in worship so I have selected a few of my picks to share with you today – some passages that I find encouraging, helpful and not too heavy – the ones that strengthen me and remind me what it is to love Jesus, what it means to be God’s chosen – God’s beloved, what God desires for me and from me.

Listen to the conversation between Jesus and Peter in these parting words from the gospel of **John, chapter 21** (verses 15-17)...

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”

A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He said to him, " *Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.*"

Jesus said to him, " *Tend my sheep.*"

He said to him the third time, " *Simon son of John, do you love me?*"

Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, " *Do you love me?*" And he said to him, " *Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.*"

Jesus said to him, " *Feed my sheep.*"

If we love Jesus it is not just about us and our personal salvation but about how we live and work in the world – we are in God's world together. Jesus is the shepherd and we love him – show our love for him – as we tend and feed his sheep. It really is as uncomplicated as that at its root because it connects our relationship with Jesus – with God – to our relationships with one another – our care of one another. These words were read and interpreted at my ordination and I hope they guide me still.

The Colossians passage was noted in a book given to me by a mentor. It is about how to behave when we have received God's grace – or as we realize that we have received God's grace – are God's beloved...

Colossians 3: 12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I think this text is a reminder that there must be a joyfulness and thankfulness in my life that can be shared. The power of the Holy Spirit fills each one of us because we are followers of Christ, therefore all that we do and all that we are should proclaim and honor that relationship. There is something of this also in the story-time book from this week: *What Fills my Heart with Happiness* that asks us to reflect on and cherish the moments in life that bring us joy.

I remember just such a moment visiting people in hospital in Edmonton during a student ministry assignment. I went to see a woman – very frail, 96 I think – and I wondered what I would say so I read a psalm. She listened and then we sat quietly for a bit before she remarked that it was wonderful that we could share the scripture with one another. I will never forget that experience – I had just read these words: *On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul. (Psalm 138: 3)* and in that moment my soul was strengthened – somehow increased – made whole.

The final selection I want to share has been marked in my various Bibles since I was a teenager. Perhaps it is strange, but I have always been drawn to Isaiah. These verses speak of potential – of the justice God desires – the oasis God hopes we will be...

Isaiah 58: 6-12

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, *Here I am*.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

How wonderful would it be to fulfil God's desire to be like a watered garden – like a rebuilders and restorer in places of brokenness. We get distracted and misled by things in our world and in the church and forget our basic mission – to participate in and show forth God's loving purpose in the world. All our religious conviction and personal piety are worth little if we cannot be God's hands and feet and heart in the world. It is my prayer for the church and each one of us as individuals within the body of Christ that our light breaks forth – that we serve as the nurturing refuge God intends.

These are my favourites – the texts I keep close to my heart and hopefully the ones that guide my life and my ministry with all of you. What are your favourites? Which texts strengthen you – guide you – challenge you to become all that God desires? I hope you will share them with us so that we can all be encouraged to embrace the abundant life God offers. Amen

➤ ***We cannot own the sunlit sky***

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† Prayer

Gracious God, we offer our prayer of thanks for Knox Church – for our congregation and its ministry with one another and our outreach in the community – for its willingness to respond to crises locally and around the world. Grant us a breadth of vision and a depth of feeling that enable us to continue the exercise of compassion that is truly Christ-like... intimate in its approach – noble in its intent – all embracing in its scope.

Help us to be steadfast in the task of discipling others – demonstrating our respect for the dignity of others, practicing the love of Jesus, maintaining enthusiasm and energy for service in the church.

Help us to use our talents to your glory O God and to the benefit of all whom we encounter – to follow the course of spiritual curiosity, to tend to those needs we see in the world.

Keep us active in worship and open to caring companionship with one another. Enable us to be keepers of faith in a culture that often demeans it, distorts it, rejects its power.

Remind us always to support one another – to be energetic in prayer, relying on you to hear and respond to the concerns that weigh upon us. We think particularly of those who are ill, grieving, lonely, confused – any who come to our mind in this quiet moment...

Holy One, we give you thanks and present our requests, knowing that you love us and that in your mercy you both hear and answer. Amen

➤ ***Spirit of the living God***

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Blessing

Our service of worship may be over – yet our service to God continues. We work to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter refugees and bring justice to the oppressed. We serve God's purpose because the love of God fills us, because our hope in Christ supports us, because the Spirit leads us. The Spirit of God is upon us – go forth to work and praise, made new by the power of God. **Amen**

➤ ***May the God of hope go with us every day***

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