

**Greeting and Announcements**

**Responsive Call to Worship**

One: The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it.

**All: The world and those who live in it belong to God.**

One: Who is the King of glory?

**All: The Lord, who is strong and mighty!**

One: So lift up your heads and your hearts!

**All: We will lift them up in praise!**

One: Let us worship God in beauty and holiness.

**All: We will offer God our steadfast love and faithfulness,  
now and always.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Gracious God, source of life and love in all creation, in a world marked by bitterness, you are compassion. In a culture marked by confusion, you are light shining in the darkness. In a time of conspiracies and suspicion, you are the truth that sets us free. Your stillness is peace when we are frantic. Your strength is comfort when we are fearful. Your wisdom is guidance when we are lost. For all that you are and all that you give, God, our Maker, Christ, our Saviour, and Spirit who leads us into life, we offer you all honour, praise and worship, now and always. Amen.

**Loving God, in a world marked by self-indulgence, you are generosity for those in need. In a world marked by injustice, you are a conscience speaking to us. In a world marked by vengeance, you are mercy and reconciliation. Forgive our selfishness; our lack of concern for the vulnerable; and our desire to settle scores rather than work things out. Renew us with your mercy and strengthen our resolve to live generously, in action and in attitude.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Dear friends, hear and believe the good news of the Gospel! In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and set free by God's generous grace! Amen!

**Children's Time**

Hymn #398 When the Spirit of the Lord

**Prayer for Understanding**

God of Word and Wisdom, as we hear the scriptures read and interpreted today, enlighten our minds, nurture our souls, embolden our hearts, and stir our minds, so that we may live out your Word in the world you love. **Amen.**

**First Scripture Reading: 2 Samuel 6: 1-5; 12b-19**

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. 3 They

carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart 4 with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. 5 David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. It was told King David, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; 13 and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. 14 David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. 15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

16 As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. 17 They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. 18 When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, 19 and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

### **Second Scripture Reading: Mark 6: 14-29**

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised.

17 For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. 22 When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." 23 And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." 25 Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

## **Reflection** By The Rev. Joan Scandrett

In the two readings chosen for today, we have two types of dancing, and two types of banquets: David's dance at the banquet of life, and Salome's dance at Herod's banquet of death.

In our reading from the Second Book of Samuel, we hear how David has brought the Ark of the Covenant, which housed for the people the powerful presence of God, and was a visible sign of God's covenant relationship to God's people. And as he entered the city, and the people of Israel welcomed God into their midst, David and all the people danced before the Lord with all their might...with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. They danced with all their might. Not a little side-to-side-sway or a polite tapping of their hands that - dare I say it - Presbyterians might do in worship ... but with all their might. David's love for God was given in the joy and abandonment of his dance. The description presents a powerful picture - where for a time all that mattered was total and complete joy in the presence of God. David, who was as we know a deeply flawed man, also had a deep love for and awareness of God, and it is a beautiful story of David's ability to be totally in the moment celebrating and loving his God. His dance is his gift - the gift of all that he is, and an expression of the covenant relationship between God and God's people. The celebration doesn't stop with the dance, but continues through a shared meal. David blesses the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and feeds them all, men and women with bread and meat and a cake of raisins. The dance becomes a banquet, a royal meal, of joy, of life, of abundance and community. What an occasion it must have been!

Can you imagine simply dancing in the presence of God? It's hard to imagine isn't it, when we church people seem to be in our heads a lot of the time. We spend time choosing the right words for worship, and the right music - all of which is what we THINK is proper and worshipful and expressive of how our God ought to be worshiped. That's not wrong, of course, but often we miss out on the privilege of feeling emotions when we stay focused on understanding and thinking things through or doing what we think is proper. Reading a story like what we heard in the first reading gives us an important reminder, though, that our worship of God is not necessarily all about understanding everything or even making sense of everything. Getting lost in the moment can tell us of a God like the God who David knew. A God of mystery and delight and celebration, a God to be feared and worshipped in awe; a God who shows us guidelines for our own good; and who calls us, when we find ourselves in the presence of the mystery, to simply dance with all our might.

Now, we turn to the second banquet - one that ends with murder, even though it starts out as a celebration for King Herod's birthday. The situation is that Herod had divorced his first wife and married Herodias, his brother-in-law's wife. Because his brother-in-law was still alive, they had broken the law, and John the Baptist had called Herod out for it. John the Baptist was a powerful witness for God, and for spreading the truth of God's ways - his work was to bring people back to a right relationship with God, by calling them to return to God's ways. Herod had been interested in some of what John the Baptist had to say, and because he wanted to be popular he tried to stay in step with him. But he had to also stay in step with his new wife, Herodias. So when John the Baptist rebuked Herod and Herodias for their illegal relationship, and the criticism became personal - well, Herod and Herodias didn't like being criticized. And in order to silence him, Herod had him thrown in jail. It

appears that Herodias didn't think that was enough to punish him, and was plotting ways of getting her revenge.

When Herodias' daughter Salome dances before her stepfather, Herod, he is pleased, and in a show of power and grandeur in front of his guests, promises to give her whatever she asks. Herodias sees this as her big chance for revenge against John the Baptist and tells her daughter to ask for John the Baptist's head on a platter. It's an awful story, really. A story of people using one another, people being manipulated, cowardly decisions being made, and actions being done just for show and for popular opinion. It's a banquet of enslavement to desire, pride, arrogance, and revenge.

The sad thing is that it doesn't seem as if too much has changed in our world since then does it...those things are all alive and well in our culture today.

Maybe we don't always realize it, but we church people are called to be witnesses for God in all that we say and all that we do in our own contexts, and our communities. If we are doing our job well, we will, like John the Baptist and other witnesses, past and present, bump up against the political and popular systems and people of the time we are living in. We don't have to worry too much, I don't think, about having our heads severed and served up on a silver platter...but we do run the risk of facing ridicule, argument, maybe humiliation, be on the receiving end of some anger or resentment, even rudeness. We will surely encounter indifference from some, and discomfort on the part of others. We will be asked to put our whole heart and soul and mind and strength into our witness, like David did.

I came across a short reflection when doing some research for this reflection - the source is unknown. I think it gives us some pretty good food for thought, as we think about what the readings for today have to say to us.

Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too well-pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little; when we have arrived safely because we stayed too close to what was familiar, when we missed the dance because we were afraid of the cost. Stir us, O Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture deeper and further until we can no longer stay silent in the face of corruption, lies, denial, exclusion, prejudice..

When we can go into the darkness because we know that's when we can best see the stars. In the name of him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes, and invited the brave to journey with him. Amen.

**Hymn of Response #250** Lord of the dance

### **Invitation to the Offering**

What we give to God speaks to the world of God's generosity, as well as our own.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Generous God, we look around at the growth in gardens and fields this summer, and trust in the generosity you have planted within your creation. Bless the gifts we bring, that they too may grow in fruitfulness, and touch lives in need with your generous love, in the name of Christ, our help and our hope. Amen.

## **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

Blessed are you, O God, for all your goodness to us. In Christ, we meet your love and wisdom, face to face. Through the Holy Spirit, we recognize the abilities and opportunities you create in us and for us, to reach out to the world you love. We thank you for all the ways friends and families, neighbours and strangers, reach out to us and to others, offering support and kindness, speaking up when we must confront wrong doing, celebrating when achievements bless us all with healing and happiness.

Today we are particularly thankful for this opportunity where we can be together in worship with people we love and have missed for so many months. We are grateful for those in leadership who have created protocols for our safety, and for all who have worked diligently to bring us to this day. We pray for the safety and well-being of all as we go through this time of transition.

We pray for courageous leaders in cities, countries and congregations who strive to serve with integrity and honesty in a world prone to self-interest. We pray for those who struggle to create justice where it has been compromised, and to build reconciliation and understanding in divided communities. We pray for our country of Canada as provinces open up and relax restrictions, and people gather with friends and family.

We pray for those who are troubled in mind or spirit, for those who find every day a struggle for those who are isolated or lonely. May we find ways to speak words of hope to them that will soothe their concerns and lead them to paths of healing.

We remember before you those who are sick and dying; for those who are bereaved, and who must try to put their lives back together without the one they love; We pray for those who are recovering from the pandemic, looking for better health, a fresh start, more stability or a glimpse of hope. Draw close to all who suffer, that they may feel the peace of your presence and the power of your love.

Receive our prayers, both spoken and unspoken, and embrace us all in your love.

Give us hearts to understand not only what you do on our behalf, but also what you call us to do on your behalf, for we are friends and followers of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## **Benediction**

Go forth into the world in faithfulness. Join all those who have danced with the Lord throughout the generations. Take the song and rhythm of God's Word into the world and invite others to celebrate the joy with you. And may the grace of Christ redeem you, the enduring love of God support you, the friendship of the Holy Spirit accompany you, this day and ever more.

**Amen!**