

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation, and that the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – have lived on this land since before settlers of European descent claimed ownership and displaced those for whom it was home.

As we pursue our goals to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament this injustice in our history and commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.

➤ ***Dance with the Spirit***

MV 156 (repeat)

Call to Worship

When we stumble and our faith falters,

God's faithfulness bears us along.

When our spirits soar and our faith grows strong,

God's faithfulness raises us up.

When our fears and concerns distract us,

God is still faithful and goes ahead of us.

God's faithfulness endures forever!

We lift our hearts in praise to our God today and always!

† Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

God holds out arms to welcome us and always opens the door to us. Let us turn to the God of love and let us pray.

Loving God, whose ear is always ready to listen, who laughs with us and cries with us, who feeds us good things, and who guides us in the way we should go, we come to worship you this morning, with our prayers, our singing, our thoughts, words and actions. Come and be present with us and show us how to be the disciples you would have us be. Jesus, look into our hearts and help us to see those things that you want to change, to heal, to strengthen and to nourish. Forgive our inability to love ourselves, and to remember that you made us in your image with your holy hands of love. Forgive our grudges or when we have settled for bitterness. Forgive our fears when we have forgotten that you are faithful in all things. Send your Holy Spirit to remake and renew us, so that we can serve you, love you and walk in your paths with trust and joy.

Hear us now as we pray in the way that you taught us... **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**

Words of Hope

God says to us: You are my chosen ones. I love you. And do not be afraid, for... I have redeemed you; you are mine. I have set you as a seal on my heart. I have carved you on the palm of my hand. Know that I have forgiven you. I call you by name. Dare to live fully – the life to which I have called you. By God's all sufficient grace; we are forgiven people. Thanks be to God.

➤ *Before the world began*

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† Prayer for Understanding

O hidden mystery, Sun behind all suns, Soul at the core of all souls, In everything we touch, In everyone we meet, Draw us close to you that we may hear what you would say to us today. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Scripture

Genesis 45: 1-8, 50:19-20

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Send everyone away from me.' So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 3Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come closer to me.' And they came closer. He said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. 7God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

19But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? 20Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.

John 15:12-17

12 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15I do not call you servants* any longer, because the servant* does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message – A Wardrobe of Wonder (Written by The Rev. Dr. Ian Victor and shared by the Rev. Cathy Victor)

Picture an old man - a wise old man,
- the kind of wise man who always seemed to know what was to come.
Now more than ever.

He always knew

Because he listened to his dreams.

He heard smaller quieter voices

than you or I could ever imagine.

What he hears now

is that his time is coming to an end.

He feels it in his bones.

It was whispered to him again last night
on the moonlight that ghosted through his room.

But now it is morning.

He groans as he rolls out of bed
and shuffles into the closet of his luxurious apartment.

Joseph will not leave the pain to his sons
after he is gone.

He will dispose of his things himself.

Decide who should get what.

The closet is jam packed

and Joseph can't help laughing at himself.

With some people it's books, with some it's pictures.

You just can never throw them out.

With him it is clothes.

If the Pharaoh hadn't been so gracious in his appreciation

Joseph would never have had the space to keep them all.

But he had - kept them all - every last shirt, pant, tunic, blouse, blazer and shoe.

At the end you have to get rid of many things.

This morning it was time to clear the closet.

He starts at one end of the rack, the hangers scraping - kaching, kaching, kaching.

He stops at a simple cotton tunic,

laughing to think that he was shrinking down to the point
where it would almost fit again.

His life's story had been woven through his wardrobe.

This tunic was the one he'd worn

under the magnificent coat his father had given him - him - the favourite sone.

It was a coat made for strutting, prancing

showing off magnificent colours,
long billowing sleeves,
never something you'd wear to work.

This sign of his Father's favour
was enough to puff him up
and feed the hatred and jealousy of his brothers.

When they'd finally had enough
they sold him to itinerant slave traders
and told their father he'd been killed.

In this tunic
He'd travelled day and night
from home in Canaan to slavery in Egypt.

And he decided - this tunic must go to someone
who is in deep despair,
who feels abandoned by God,
as a garment of Hope,
for when I wore it I was torn from my family and homeland
- but ended up in the house of Potiphar to be blessed beyond my imagining.
A garment of hope.

Kaching, kaching, kaching
Joseph remembered how good he looked in his fine woven robe.
A gift from his owner Potiphar,
a captain of Pharaoh's guard.

As a young slave Joseph could never understand
how this pagan
this believer in foreign Gods
could see and honour the hand of Israel's God
on Joseph's life.

Potiphar's years as an officer had made him a savvy judge of character.
He saw in Joseph
abilities, talents
and some special undefinable something
that made him know this was an extraordinary young man.

He gave his household slave
more and more responsibilities
greater and greater challenges,

Until Joseph was running it all.
He managed the staff, handled the investments,
negotiated with the bankers.

He even got the VCR to stop blinking 12:00 12:00 12:00 12:00

Joseph remembered how good he was
And how good he looked in his fine woven robe.
Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife thought he looked good too.
She began subtly at first,
 a sly glance, a provocative gesture...
But Joseph was not interested.
He would not betray Potiphar.
He certainly would not betray God!

A torn lapel told the rest of the story.
 One day, Potiphar was gone,
 the slaves were out.
The house was empty and she seized her chance,
 cornered him,
 grabbed him by the lapels
 and said, *Lie with me*.
He spun out of the robe, hearing it rip
 and dashed outside,
 with her still hold the robe.
And when Potiphar returned
 she told him a story of Joseph attacking her.

There was no trial, no explaining.
 No reasoning.
He was imprisoned.

This must go, he decided - to someone who suffers for their righteousness who pays unjustly for the sins of another so that they will know that God is still with them.
Let this be for them a garment of Trust.

Kaching, kaching, kaching...
Huh. the *prison issue* suit.
Unlike most, Joseph wasn't in Pharaoh's prison for long.
He showed an uncanny ability to interpret the dreams of others.
- Pharaoh's cup-bearer - a man the king must trust
- and his baker - who also must be above reproach.

In our days we have public opinion polls
 (note tomorrow's election)
In their days they had poison,
which was quicker and kinder.
Pharaoh had been troubled by dreams
 that his advisors couldn't fathom.

And when he heard of Joseph,
and how he'd interpreted for the cupbearer
and his baker, he called for Joseph at once.

The guards roused him,
cleaned him up,
shaved him,
put him in this suit,
and hauled him before Pharaoh.

The dreams were simple enough to explain.
A time of great prosperity - seven years - was coming,
to be followed by seven years of drought and famine.
The nation must prepare.

If Pharaoh will build storehouses for the surplus grain,
he will feed his people in the lean years
and enrich his coffers with other hungry nations.

Pharaoh was as impressed by Joseph as Potiphar had been.
And as the years went on and Joseph's predictions proved true
Joseph grew in status and responsibility.

But it only had been possible
because he had interpreted the dreams of his fellow prisoners.

Not many people ever left Pharaohs prison.
And Joseph decided this prison suit must go to someone
who uses their gifts to help others,
no matter where they are,
no matter what their circumstances.

It is a garment of Compassion.
Best worn by anyone whose spirit can never be chained.

Kaching, Kaching, Kaching...

This stole still took his breath away.
There was no finer weave in the world
than in this royal linen
interlaced with threads of silver and gold.

A gift from Pharaoh.

On the occasion of Joseph's enthronement
as Vizier, Prime Minister of all of Egypt.

He became the most powerful man in the nation,
received Pharaoh's ring as a sign of his authority,
and a gold chain of office.
And an Egyptian name - Zaphenath Paneah

and this stole.

He assumed Egyptian ways,
clean shaven, heavy makeup,
An Egyptian wife and in time, children.

To all appearances he had become one of them.
But in his heart, he knew who his country was,
who his true family was,
who God was.

No honour
no glory
no wealth
no fame
Would ever change that.

Nor would a stole.

It would probably fetch a pretty price
if it weren't for the black streaks
and splotches that stained it.
Eye make-up. Ancient mascara. Tracks of cascading tears.

The famine was deep in the region. And his brothers had come to buy food.
They couldn't recognize him, but he knew immediately who they were.
Twice he had to leave the room, overcome with emotion.
He arranged through various tricks
to have them return home
to bring back the youngest
his brother Benjamin.

And on seeing him he could masquerade no longer.

He fell on Benjamin's neck weeping for joy
staining his stole
but healing his soul.

There were banquets and feasts and celebrations galore.
And a plan was made.
The family would move to Egypt
to share Joseph's prominence and prosperity.
And so it was.
The stole was beautiful,
but stained by tears.

And Joseph decided it must go to
someone who has everything in the word

but that which they most need and most desire;
love, and reconciliation with the people who mean the most to them.
This is a garment of Charity and Peace.

Joseph is tired now
The memories and exhilarating and exhausting.
And as he heads for the closet door he runs his hand down the rack.
Kaching, kaching, kaching, kaching.....

And he understands the unusual chorus:
Hope and trust
Compassion and reconciliation
Plenty and want
Joy and deep darkness.
His life has been clothed by God, the God of his fathers and mothers:
Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
Sarah, Rachel and Leah .

It is a wardrobe of wonder,
how God's hand was as close on his life as the clothes on his back.
Joseph was a wise old man,
the kind of wise man who always seemed to know what was to come.

It is time for a final clothing.
He puts on a shroud and shuffles back to bed,
wraps himself in the comforter
and lies down to dream his last dream.
Of a time when his people will be enslaved by the Egyptians.
Of a time when they will be set free to return to the land of God's promise.
Of a One who will come
to inhabit all their dreams
to heal all their wounds
to clothe them all in righteousness.
Greater promises will be fulfilled.
And everything will be alright.

“And Joseph died, being one hundred
and ten years old: He was embalmed
and placed in a coffin in Egypt.”

➤ *To Abraham and Sarah*

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† Offering and Prayer

Let us respond to God's love for us as we bring our offerings to God. (The offering is presented.)

Holy God, we offer ourselves with our gifts this morning, confident that you have a purpose for them and for us. All this we bring before you, because of the love you have poured out on us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Bless each person and multiply each gift, that your rule may be realized in all people. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

† Pastoral Prayers

O God of the prophets and the apostles, and of all men and women who speak the truth and do it. We thank you for Jesus, who brought good news to the oppressed, and sealed his message in his blood. Now we need no longer mourn, for he is the life. Now we need no longer grope in the darkness, for he is the light. Now we need no longer groan in chains, for he is the liberating word. We thank you for the gifts of this life, and of this week for the things, events and people that have moved us to joy for the signs of your grace and the beauties of creation for our friends and families, our work and our leisure.

O God in Christ, you call us to be prophets. Give us clear vision of where you call us. Make us eager to be sent and to be steady on our mission.

Holy Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, in words and in silence, receive our prayers for others. We pray for the body of Christ, the church, both here and in all places...

where it is oppressed, encourage and set our brothers and sisters free.

where it is weak; renew and strengthen it.

Grant your wisdom and love to all who lead and care for your people.

We pray for those in positions of power and leadership in our world....

for those seeking election tomorrow in our country. May all things be done in fairness.

for those who serve as teachers, healers, and caregivers – especially health care workers struggling through this pandemic

for the poor and all who are outcast, unaccepted, isolated or held suspect

for those who mourn... and those who have endured great loss...

for those who are sick, suffering or facing death....

We pray for all who cry out to you for your mercy, justice and love. May the guarding of God be theirs and ours. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

Blessing

And now may the compassing of the angels be upon you. The blessing of God be upon you. The guarding of the Holy Spirit be upon you. The joy and the peace of the loving Christ be upon you...today, tonight and always. Amen