

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

As we come to worship in Jesus' name we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather. We commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.

➤ *Gathered in the love of Christ*

Call to Worship

In mystery and grandeur, we encounter the God of all creation.

In renewed justice and the promise of new life, we know the deep love of Christ.

In the wonderful diversity in every community, the Spirit of God moves among us.

Let us worship the God of beauty, love, and wisdom.

We will praise God, ever Three and ever One, now and always.

➤ *Like the murmur of the dove's song* 385

† Prayer and Words of Hope

Creator God, you are the maker of a better world – the creator of lasting peace. We worship you for the gifts of peace and healing that you bring into troubled lives. You have shown us the way to work for justice – to build a better world. In this time of worship, inspire us to believe our work in your name makes a difference.

God of grace and unity, we confess we can be divisive when you have called us to unity – quarrelsome when you call us to seek peace – critical rather than caring. We have grown used to our own ways and cannot imagine you would ask us to change even for the sake of the gospel. Forgive us when we mistake our familiar traditions for your truth. Show us how we can witness to your love through working and worshipping together. Amen

God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. It shines in the world and scatters the darkness. Know that you are forgiven and forgive one another. Be at peace and walk in the newness of life, led by God's light.

➤ *The Spirit breathes upon the word* 506

† Prayer for Understanding

You call, O God, and we respond with trusting faith and gentle hope – with creative enthusiasm and honest doubt. We are rooted in the teachings of Jesus and grounded in your generous love. Help us to hear your call in scripture today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Scripture **Psalm 19** responsive/displayed

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong runner pursues its course with joy.

**Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.**

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;

the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;

the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;

the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;

the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;

sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

But who can detect their errors?

Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from proud thoughts; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a [NT 174]

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "*Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,*" that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "*Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,*" that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, *"I have no need of you,"* nor again the head to the feet, *"I have no need of you."*

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts.

Luke 4: 14-21 [NT 61]

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

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

Message ***Suffering and Rejoicing Together***

There are many members, yet one body... Should we turn to one another then and ask which part of the body of Christ a person believes they are? Are you the cerebellum? Are you the heart? Are you the hands?

It might be amusing but this exercise actually evades the many challenges of the text. Instead let's zoom in on one verse: *If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.*

One of the reasons this eye-hand-body passage is so popular is that it doesn't really require analysis or explanation. You read it or hear it, and you get it – I cannot say I have no need of you; I am part of a body, and obviously a body's eyeball is not going to tell its thumb to get lost.

When Paul specifies bodily suffering, the metaphor keeps on working. Often, when any part of your body suffers, the whole body suffers. We all know that an earache or an upset stomach or a twisted ankle can define your whole day: the suffering of one part of the body really does make the entire body suffer. Bruised ribs can disturb your breathing, your back, your sleeping and your whole routine – it's all connected – trust me on this!

But this is also where the metaphor may reach its limits – not the end of its usefulness but the edge where it begins to unsettle us. If I have a cold and begin to cough uncontrollably (which has happened to me so often in my life), the rest of my body does indeed naturally suffer. But do those around me feel the pain of the spasm or the frustration of a voice that squeaks? When other people suffer – when someone else's parent or spouse dies for example – do we really suffer? It is true that when my church family and friends experience a devastating diagnosis and a death and a family tragedy all at once, I get overwhelmed – I cry. But usually, I am somewhat prepared for it – certainly not indifferent, but not exactly suffering with the suffering either.

Paul's statement is meant to be encouraging – strongly advising a course of action – he is telling us how it is supposed to be in the body of Christ. In the body of Christ, we are to cultivate compassion. I am an eye. I am to do things, as an eye, which makes me open to the suffering of the hand. And very often, I do not. Very often I remain buffered from the suffering of the rest of the body.

Usually I try to focus on one of the lectionary selections each week when I am preparing to preach – sometimes just a line or a phrase within a given text as I did last week reflecting primarily on the common good, but this week they overlap and connect for me. In fact, I have trouble reading today's passage about the beginning of Jesus' ministry from Luke, Chapter 4 without hearing echoes – or perhaps foreshadowing – of the end of Jesus' ministry in Chapter 23. *"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* *"Today you will be with me in Paradise."* These words of Jesus are like bookends to his ministry. In both cases the present moment – *today* – seems important. Try to live in the now – don't agonize with regret or paralyse yourself with worry – be present in your relationship with our living God today. The other thing that rings true for me in these gospel texts is the focus on the salvation – care for – importance of – attentiveness and connectivity to the other. In Luke 23 we hear one criminal focusing on his salvation and on the ability of Jesus to save himself and those hanging beside him. Instead, Jesus remembers the whole of God's creation – knowing that none can be saved while some are

forgotten. When he reads from the Isaiah scroll, Jesus reminds those gathered in the synagogue that their road to salvation – to right relationship with God – lies in their compassion for others – the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable in their society.

It is this compassion – literally, *to suffer together with* – that defines who we are as Christians – the body of Christ. And this is what Paul means when he talks to the Corinthians about how the body is “arranged”. He makes a point to acknowledge that some are weaker than others in the body – some thought to be less honourable or less respectable – and that this is our opportunity to care for one another. We are called to suffer together and to rejoice together – to actively desire to alleviate another’s pain or discomfort and to take the time to drop what we are doing when there is a need to celebrate.

The Presbytery of Vancouver Island meets Tuesday. The presbytery is made up of all the teaching elders – clergy – of Presbyterian churches on Vancouver Island and one ruling elder from each congregation. Its purpose is to govern the affairs of the church that we have in common and to support one another in our various ministries – to be the body of Christ.

We are the body of Christ and individually members of it. How do we know when part of the body is struggling and in need of our help? How do we best suffer together? How do we know when part of the body is thriving and in need of accolades? How do we rejoice in community? Not only do we endure one another’s pain, we experience one another’s joy. We are called to celebrate and give thanks together – to take pleasure in tributes of praise. *We are the body of Christ...*

You can think about this body metaphor in a variety of ways. AIDS activists, among others, have claimed Paul’s language in an especially pointed – and convicting – way saying: *the body of Christ has AIDS*. Meaning: *when one person in the body of Christ has AIDS, we all have AIDS*. The picture here is one of solidarity – mutual support – a moral community in relation with one another and with God.

Similarly, when one community experiences the horrifying slaughter of innocents in their school, we all experience it as trauma. When people are tortured by political persecution on one continent, all parts of the world are called to act. Think of the current situation between Ukraine and Russia – all nations have a stake in this conflict. When an Indigenous person in Canada is ignored or sidelined or mistreated, our country, and each one of us, is shamed and made less. When children are bullied to the point of despair, the whole society suffers.

During the past few weeks many of you have been suffering with Dorothy as she supports her friend Gloria whose husband is missing. I have heard sighs of despair, seen tears, noticed the crack in someone’s voice and the flash of pain cross another’s face as we imagine the fear and concern and agony in this situation. We feel that sick sensation in the pit of our stomachs – suffering with a family we don’t even know.

This is, I think, what Paul is after, the breaking down of barriers between our own experience and the experience of others – between our relative safety and the vulnerability of many – between our health and the dis-ease of a friend – between our wealth and another’s poverty.

In ministry it is normal and usual to hear about and sit with people in their suffering – to be privy to the large and small joys that fill each life – and to carry the knowledge of those burdens and delights into the pulpit. Perhaps I know more than I should some days, but one commentary I read suggested that part of my responsibility as your teaching elder is to provoke, perhaps gently, the breaking down of barriers that keep people safe and separate. To provoke the bridging of the divide that might keep those in our community of faith tucked away from the circumstances of the rest of the world. To provoke the compassion for others I hear in the gospel of Luke... *be present in your relationship with the living God remembering that your salvation is tied to the salvation of the whole creation* and in Paul’s message because... *if one suffers, all suffer – if one is honoured, all rejoice*. Who are you suffering or celebrating with today?

➤ ***To show by touch and word*** **763**

† Offering Invitation

The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are part of one body, each of us and all of us. The gifts we offer in Jesus’ name are all needed, each of them and all of them. Together, the body of Christ accomplishes many things through the gifts we share.

➤ ***Praise God from whom all blessings flow*** **306**

† Offering Prayer

Creator God, you made each of us in our uniqueness, and together, all of us to bear your image in the world. Accept our gifts, unique as they are, and bless them for the sake of Jesus. May they bear his grace and mercy into the world you love so your purposes will be fulfilled. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers and the Lord’s Prayer

God of life, God of love. You created us and set us in relationship with each other – in families and neighbourhoods – in churches and communities – in cultures and nations. We give you thanks for the rich gifts of arts and culture – of home life and community celebration – which bring meaning and encouragement to our lives. Help us contribute our gifts to the traditions and imagination that sustain the best of our common life from one generation to the next.

God of mercy and forgiveness. You call us to live together in peace and unity. In this Week of Prayer for Christian unity, we pray that your Spirit will create understanding and co-operation among all who bear Christ’s name. Help us share our gifts with each other so that churches within our community may flourish and our common mission will find new energy after months of challenge. Lead us to reach out to those of other faiths and no faith so that, together, we may be a blessing in the world you love.

God of healing and hope. We pray for our neighbourhoods and our nation. Where people are divided and bitterness turns into resentment, show us how to work for reconciliation. Inspire our leaders at every level of community life to work together for the care of the most vulnerable and to restore the goodness of our common life as we recover from the effects of this time of pandemic. Make us generous citizens and careful stewards of the land you entrust to us together.

God of justice and mercy. We pray for the world you love – the world Christ redeems – so deeply divided by religious and political animosities, by ancient bitterness and current conflict. Encourage world leaders to work for peace and understanding, especially in places torn by violence, and areas still struggling with the effects of the pandemic, by poverty, hunger and the effects of natural disasters. May the hope Jesus embodies encourage us all to work for positive change and the common good.

God of courage and comfort. We remember in silence or aloud those of our congregation and community in need of your special attention today...

Use us as agents of your healing and hope as we offer ourselves in Jesus' name in the words he 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***

➤ ***Draw the circle wide***

Blessing

Go into the world suffering and rejoicing together – renewed by the creative word of God – inspired by the grace-filled witness of Jesus – bound together by the power of the Holy Spirit. And may the grace of the Risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Spirit embrace us all.

➤ ***Go now in peace (round)***

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