

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.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns

*God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

➤ *Gathered in the love of Christ*

Call to Worship

In the bulb, there is a flower.

In the seed, there is a tree.

In the midst of this community, there is a Spirit

That awakens us to God's vision of abundant life

Revealed most fully in and through Jesus Christ.

Let us worship God who creates, redeems and sustains us!

Let us worship God together as we pray...

† Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

Holy God, by your grace you touch our fears with the fire of your compassion – you touch our brokenness with the fire of your forgiveness – you touch our hearts with the fire of your love.

Jesus Christ, by your grace you step into our lives and an unpredictable journey begins. You challenge us to new thinking, with overflowing results – you confront our doubts so that we can cast out our fears.

Holy Spirit, by your grace you give us eyes to see the emptiness of our world – you give us ears to hear the good news – you give us words to bring hope to all people.

Forgive us when we fail to use the gifts you have given us for good in the world. Forgive us when we live in fear – reluctant to step out in faith. Forgive us when allow the passion of your love to falter and fade within us.

Have mercy O God and help us to embrace the grace you offer us each day. **Amen**

When we call on the Lord we are answered, forgiven and our soul is strengthened. Thanks be to God for the gift of grace.

† Prayer for Understanding

O God, our strength, lift us up on wings as a mother eagle supporting her young. When we are weary, restore us to your purpose and fill us with your hope. Open your word this morning to our yearning hearts through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Scripture**Isaiah 6: 1-8** [OT 635]

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!"

Psalm 138 [responsive/displayed]

I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth.

They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

For though the LORD is high, God regards the lowly; but perceives the haughty from far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.

O LORD, fulfill your purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Mark 12: 28-34 [NT 49]

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, *“Which commandment is the first of all?”*

Jesus answered, *“The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

Then the scribe said to him, *“You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, *“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”* After that no one dared to ask him any question.

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

Message (The section in [blue print](#) is adapted from Guy Smagghe’s message for PWS&D Sunday 2022)

It was the year King Uzziah died.

It was the year US President Kennedy died.

It was the year of the tsunami in India – in Japan.

It was the year of the earthquake in Haiti – in Nepal.

It was the year that racists, facists and anti-vax terrorists stormed our nation’s capital. The year we could no longer ignore the dangerous and divisive elements in our own country – when we had to stop pointing at others while considering ourselves immune.

It was the year PWS&D celebrated it’s 75th Anniversary.

It was the year of the Tiger.

It was the year when things fell apart, when foundations were shaken, when the markets crumbled, when all that had once been familiar now seemed long ago and far away.

It was the year King Uzziah died.

It was a bad time, a shaky time, a frightening time. But then suddenly Isaiah, probably as preoccupied by this world’s news and events as was anyone else in Israel back then, had his vision wrenched to heaven. On the one side was King Uzziah and the rest of what constituted

normal, everyday life in this world. It all seemed large and important until he saw God high and lifted up, and suddenly Isaiah found all of his perceptions and priorities re-aligned.

The reference to the timing of Isaiah's vision gives us many clues to the historical and political context of Isaiah's ministry, but it also anchors the vision in Isaiah's experience as a human person. We mark life-changing spiritual events in relation to the times in which we live. Encounters with God are interwoven with the events in our lives. Part of responding to God's call is learning to look and listen for God, especially at the turning points of life. As we pass through transitions, celebrations or crises, God may well meet us with a new vision and a fresh word.

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision and suddenly he felt unworthy – unclean. And when he looked around him at the rest of his society in the light that was streaming at him from God's throne, he knew that the rest of the world was likewise unclean – messed up, tawdry, and sinful. So he confessed. He cried out the truth of his condition. And God forgave him. God cleansed him with fire and then gave him a job to do.

Isaiah's vision is intimate and close, but also frightening and dangerous and disturbing. Likely, most of us have never had such a mystical vision and will never have. There is no need to feel anxious about not experiencing a vision of biblical proportions, but we can attend to our own experiences of awe in the presence of God. These experiences come in public worship, in private devotion, in mission service, in close relationship, in every day life. When you live in communion with the Spirit of God, the splendor and beauty of God breaks through – often in unexpected times and places – in ways that lead us to awe – which leads to greater clarity about God's call on our lives.

Isaiah's experience of God's presence, led him to a profound awareness of his own brokenness and the brokenness of his community. He is touched with his own and his people's frailty and imperfection. Isaiah is made whole – healed by an act of grace. Symbolically and dramatically, we are brought here to the heart of the gospel: that in Christ, God flies to a broken people offering forgiveness and new life.

That gospel comes to fruition as love of God and love of our neighbour – the greatest commandment and a hard one, as our society continuously encourages us to look primarily after ourselves. We hear politicians say “we will only do something if it is in Canada's interest,” “we will agree only in our province's interest” ...honestly, it irks me when I hear those phrases as they encourage us to close our minds to the needs of others, of our neighbours nearby or far away who may actually need a little more compassion and solidarity from places like Canada.

The recent pandemic has brought to light the injustices and inequalities in access to health services, and to vaccines in so many countries. Did you know that only 4% of the population of Malawi has been vaccinated so far?

How are we caring for our neighbours? Can we begin to think differently and to put the well-being of all ahead of our own self-interest? Jesus called us to care for our neighbour as ourselves.

Isn't my neighbour not only the one who lives next door but also the one who is living in a slum in India – the one affected by drought, and just recently flooding, in Malawi – the one who had to leave her home in Syria to seek refuge in Lebanon – the one who can't find enough food to feed her family in Afghanistan? Jesus was referring to all of them when he asked us to love our neighbour. Can I love my neighbour but be indifferent to his sickness,to her hunger?

For the last 75 years, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has acted on this call from Jesus by setting up mechanisms for relief and development internationally so that we can reach our neighbours in need, wherever they might be. Eventually, this became known as Presbyterian World Service & Development, an effective way that allows each one of us to respond to Jesus' call to action to love our neighbour – allows each of us to lay our lives before God saying, *Here I am, send me, use me, let me help.*

It all began in 1947, Europe had been devastated by World War II and desperately needed assistance. The church asked every congregation to collect gifts to provide relief to Europe. This endeavour became known as Canadian Church Relief Abroad of the Board of Evangelism and Social Action.

In 1968 the General Assembly responded to the emerging needs of the Nigeria-Biafra crisis. The sum of \$7,500 was given to provide relief supplies for Biafra in early 1968.

In 1970, the church recognized that it was not sufficient to respond only to emergencies. That year, the General Assembly report stated: *“Although emergency feeding and housing are important, more and more we see the need and the benefit of development aid – seed, fertilizer, plants, pesticides, farm machinery and experts to teach their uses, digging new wells for drinking water and irrigation purposes, the prevention of soil erosion and increasing fertility for crops.”*

We are a small denomination and on our own, our outreach would be very limited. But the PCC has always been known for punching above our weight. We do that, first because Presbyterians are extraordinarily generous and see relief and development as fundamental to living out our call from Christ. And secondly because we have learned how to work in partnerships that exponentially improve our ability to respond.

By 1980 the General Assembly had accepted a recommendation to change the name to the Committee on Presbyterian World Service and Development – PWS&D.

It is at that time that we started receiving funding from the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency (known then as CIDA). This allowed us to start engaging with partners on multi-year projects which meant that we began making a more sustainable difference in the lives of those to whom we reached out.

PWS&D joined the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in 1993. The Canadian Food Grains Bank combines the work of almost 30 Canadian Christian churches, working together to end world hunger. Soon after we were sending large food shipments to North Korea – \$5 million worth of grains shipped yearly from Canada for the starving population of North Korea. This continued for 10 years as we coordinated efforts with the Mennonites and the United Church. Matching funds from the

Canadian government helped us tremendously to achieve this large-scale response, something we couldn't dream of doing on our own.

As most of you know I have had the opportunity to visit our partners in India a few times. One of the programs we had was the community health program in the tribal areas of central India, in and around Jobat. It was Pauline Brown, a Canadian nurse sent as a missionary by the church, who introduced us to the area and for many years we helped to train community health workers who reached out into rural villages identifying the health needs, and teaching families how to stay healthy and where to seek medical attention when needed.

They particularly focused on maternal health, ensuring healthy pregnancies and healthy deliveries, thereby reducing the number of maternal and infant deaths. We have since undertaken similar maternal and child health programs in Afghanistan and in Malawi with great life-saving and life-changing results.

Do you remember Boxing Day 2004? It was the year of a great earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean. For many of us, it was the first time we grasped the biblical magnitude of a tsunami. For the next five years we engaged in rebuilding houses, building community shelters, training youth in trades other than fishing, providing nets and boats to those who would continue to fish, supporting women with establishing small businesses, and providing psycho-social care for so many who had experienced loss and trauma.

Every year, we respond to large and small disasters around the world whether or not they are covered in the news. We respond because we are called by our faith to respond.

Do you remember September 2nd 2015? It was the year a 3-year old Syrian refugee named Alan Kurdi died in the Mediterranean Sea, his body washed up on a beach in Turkey. Alan and his family were Syrian refugees trying to reach Europe from Turkey. This event was a trigger for Canada to wake up to the tragedy of the Syrian refugee crisis. PWS&D and the Presbyterian Church in Canada scaled up their refugee sponsorship efforts to respond to the needs.

PWS&D is also ready to assist people in Afghanistan with food assistance to get through the winter months but are facing new challenges. The global community faces pressure to prevent a widespread famine that has its origins in global sanctions against the Taliban, which has been named a terrorist group. The vast majority of people in Afghanistan are innocent victims of this tragedy.

From North Korea to Afghanistan, why do we decide to work in those places under such tyrannical regimes? Our call from Christ transcends political differences – a hungry person is a hungry person and we have an obligation to respond to need regardless of where it occurs. They are our neighbours too, even if they are hard to reach, even if they are not Christians.

So here we are, in 2022, looking back at 75 years of work and looking forward to the challenges ahead. Climate emergencies, political instability, conflict – all of these are creating new limitations with new challenges to reach out to those in need.

Presbyterian World Service & Development is an agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada with the mission to build a more sustainable, compassionate and just world. Thank you for being part of this great story of solidarity so far.

I invite you to continue to love your neighbor – the one you can see and the one you can't see but to whom you can reach out through Presbyterian World Service and Development. We are called to join God in mission because we have encountered God, because we have been brought face to face with God's holiness and our brokenness, and because we have been made whole by God's grace. In response to this worshipful moment, we lay our lives before God and in God's service. Isaiah says, "Here I am, send me!" in response to God's presence and grace. Isaiah is not volunteering because he thinks he has skills God can use, or has time on his hands. Isaiah is laying his life before the God who encountered him and has made him whole.

The question for each of us is always how our experience of God's presence, and the grace that comes from that, calls us to service – and how we will respond. **Amen**

➤ *Lord, whose love* 722

† Offering Invitation

With God's blessing, our offering truly makes a difference, touching lives with God's love and mercy in Jesus' name.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

† Offering Prayer

God of surprising generosity, Jesus encouraged his disciples to keep fishing when they thought their nets were empty. Encourage us to keep giving even when needs seem overwhelming and resources scarce. We entrust our gifts to you with the faith you can surprise us and others with all they can accomplish in Jesus' name. Amen

A New Creed

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:

***who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus – the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others by the Spirit.***

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation,

*to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.*

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Gathering at the Lord's Table

We have heard about God, who loved confusion into order and gave each creature a divine image, making the world.

We have heard about Jesus, a poor man whose banquet feeds the world, a healer whose wounds give life, a teacher whose wisdom traces love's order in the world, finding the divine in each of us.

We have heard how Jesus died, and how, for those who loved him, he rose again.

We have heard about the Holy Spirit, who breaks the bonds of race and class, of gender and creed, to show God's love for everyone.

And we have heard that love makes all things new. We come to this table asking for the bread of such blessings.

These miracles begin with simple human gestures, bits of bread in a basket, tongues that talk, souls that yearn. And so we bring bread and wine, prayers and our own yearning, that the miraculous may begin in us today.

➤ ***Worship the Lord***

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God be with you.

And also, with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Gracious God, we praise your holy name, giving thanks with our lips and our lives...

For the power and mystery of your Word by which you created us and called us to yourself, we give you thanks.

For the power and mystery of your Word by which you took flesh and lived among us through your Son, Jesus Christ, we give you thanks.

Therefore, with all the *company of heaven* and all who will come after us, we lift our voices in joyful praise...

O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!

Faithful God, we offer you our praise and thanks as we return to you these holy gifts of bread and wine...

Remembering that on the night of his arrest Jesus sat down to eat with friends. During the meal, he took the bread, said a prayer, broke the bread and shared it with everyone at the table, saying: ***"This is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me."***

At the end of the meal, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying: ***"This is God's new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me."***

We ponder, O God, the mystery of his promise that in this meal we are joined to him and to one another as a holy people. We offer you our praise and thanks for Jesus, who took flesh and lived among us, was baptized for our sins, taught us your way of truth, loved us in our lovelessness and died that we may have life.

...We celebrate with great joy the resurrection of our Lord, his presence with us in this feast, and his promise of a new creation as we affirm the mystery of faith...

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again! Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

God of grace and power, you invite us to share in mysteries that are beyond our understanding...

...in simple trust we seek the transforming power of your Spirit upon us and upon this bread and wine. By the miracle of your grace may they be for us your body – vibrant with your life, renewing and making us whole. And as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed again into you – bone of your bone – flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.

In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever and so we sing...

Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen! Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!

Sharing Bread and Wine

The one who was first held by Mary is held for us in this bread.

The one whose body was laid in a manger, is cradled in this cup.

The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God.

Those in person have received a pre-sealed communion package. Everyone consumes the elements together in their own space...

† Prayer after Communion

Loving God, we praise you for the food received at your table. We give thanks for your faithfulness and abundance that fills all creation. We celebrate the gift of your presence among us in Jesus. Trusting in you, we offer all our quiet thoughts and prayers into your care. We pray for this congregation as we seek to live out our faith and struggle to be authentic. May we go from here, strengthened, refreshed, and empowered by your Spirit to be true and joyful witnesses to Jesus Christ – living to your glory in all we do. We sing our prayer together...

➤ *Our Father in heaven (The Lord's Prayer – no repeats) 469*

Blessing

Go into this week knowing that your life has been touched by grace – convinced that you are connected to a larger world – filled with the love of the Gospel of Christ. And may the grace of the Living Lord, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace us all.

➤ *Go now in peace (round) 622*