

Welcome, Announcements, 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.

➤ *Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary (repeat)*

Lenten Liturgy

During Lent, we remember that God's plans for all creation are unfolding.

God is with us; we need not fear.

God has good plans for us; plans to bring us greater wholeness and peace.

God is with us in our journey of becoming.

Let us pray... **Creator God, we begin the Lenten journey trusting that you are intimately involved in our lives. Whatever we face, we can rest in your steadfast love, and have the courage to follow you into the new life you have promised. Help us to navigate each day by the power of your Spirit, and in all that we do, let us honour Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen**

Words of Hope

Persistently, patiently, lovingly, God pours out grace and joy into our lives, healing our brokenness, forgiving us and setting us free to be the healing hands and feet of Jesus wherever we go.

➤ *Bless the Lord (taize chant)*

PWS&D Sharing **Emergency Treatment for Malnutrition**

In Somalia, Shiindha was worried when her three-year-old son, Abdihakim, became sick and hadn't improved after two months. One day a community worker from a PWS&D-supported nutrition project visited Abdihakim's village. After an assessment, the three-year-old was identified as malnourished.

Abdihakim was immediately provided with a therapeutic food supplement intended to prevent and treat malnutrition. "He really started becoming healthier after two weeks of treatment," shared his mother, Shiindha. After a month and a half, Abdihakim made a full recovery.

Nutrition staff from the clinic also equipped Shiindha with advice on how to diversify her family's diet and how good hygiene practices can help prevent further malnutrition.

Speaking of how thankful she is for the program, Shiindha commented, “I am forever grateful for the existence of such services to help our children.”

Through support of PWS&D, we can help vulnerable families overcome hunger. *This project is a collaborative effort led by Development and Peace with additional funds from Canadian Foodgrains Bank.*

➤ ***Come and find the quiet centre***

displayed

† Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God, we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from your mouth. Make us hungry for this heavenly food that it may nourish us in the ways of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Scripture

Psalm 91 responsive/displayed

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD,

“My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.”

For God will deliver you from the snare of the fowler’s and from the deadly pestilence.

The Lord will cover you with feathers, you will find refuge under God’s wings. God’s faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

You will not fear the terror of night, or the arrow that flies by day,

or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only look with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

For the Lord will command the angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Those who love me, I will deliver;

I will protect those who know my name.

When they call to me, I will answer them;

I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them. With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

Luke 4: 1-13 [NT 61]

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread."

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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

Message ***The Challenge of Solitude***

When I was about 13 or 14 I found a place to hide. It was among some large bushes and tall grasses that had been left untouched between my Montreal neighbourhood and the highway into town. I don't recall any troublesome reasons for me to hide.

But I needed the solitude and the space to gather my thoughts and to sort of catch my breath. Looking back, I can think of other places that served that purpose for me as well. Perhaps you have had places like that in your lives too. Even though that place was near the highway, the bushes and grasses muffled the noise and for me it was a quiet place, a place of peace.

Today's gospel reading is about Jesus heading out to the wilderness - the desert for 40 days. Jesus had his reasons for needing that time. He had just been baptized by his cousin, John. The Holy Spirit had descended on him like a dove the scripture tells us, and everyone heard the voice of God proclaim, "You are my Son, The Beloved, with you I am well pleased."

Jesus had not even begun his ministry yet, but the writer of Luke for all the chapters leading up to this, has been telling us who Jesus is. The angel Gabriel had told Mary she was to have a son who would be the Son of God. Her response to the angel was "Here I am, the servant of the Lord."

Mary's cousin Elizabeth knew who Mary's son was too. So did Simeon, Anna and John the Baptist. The genealogy in Luke 3 explains that that is who Jesus is as well. We know Jesus' identity.

There in the wilderness the devil challenges Jesus' identity. Scripture tells us Jesus was there in the wilderness for 40 days. Forty days should ring some bells for God's people. The people of God spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. During that time God cared for them, despite their arguing and complaining.

Moses was on the mountain for 40 days with no food and Elijah spent 40 days getting to the mountain of God. The history of God's people often is framed by the number 40. Forty tells us it was a very long time in biblical speak.

And then along comes the devil. He is not some character in a red body suit with a pitchfork and horns. Rather the evil one is bold, cunning and clever. Fred Craddock, one of my favourite theologians notes that those who are most engaged with the way of God seem to experience the opposition of evil often. I've heard others says that too, and I believe they are correct. In fact, the devil isn't even asking Jesus to take part in some debauchery. Rather it's more like - here! Let me really make you look like God. Think of all the hungry people who would love it if you turned stones into bread! Of course, you must be hungry too, but just think of the possibilities. Give the people what they want! You can be so relevant. Jesus responds with scripture. "One does not live by bread alone."

The Devil shows Jesus all the nations of the world. You could be so powerful! Just worship me and it's all yours. This temptation of political popularity doesn't work either. Jesus comes back with more scripture: "Worship the Lord your God, and worship only Him."

Jesus is taken to Jerusalem and is asked to show just how powerful he really is. Throw yourself off this tower! The devil then starts quoting scripture back at Jesus, verse 11 of Psalm 91 that we read today. "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you. On their hands they will bear you up" and so on. Even the evil one can use scriptures.

But Jesus knows that life is more than food. He knows the true source of life is God, and his reliance on God who is the only one worthy of worship. And so Jesus makes it clear that he is entirely dependent on God, rather than self for life, glory and his identity.

And here we are at the beginning of the season of Lent. Another time of 40 days (not including Sundays - because those are always the day of resurrection)

Traditionally, some people have given things up for Lent, as a way to focus perhaps on what is important, as a reminder to turn to God instead of whatever you have given up. It can be a helpful tool for some. I done that, and maybe you have too.

It is also a time when some have tried different spiritual disciplines - reading scripture, times of prayer. Perhaps trying a different kind of prayer than what you are used to.

The prayer discipline called the Examen is one that I think of and often use. It is ancient and has been practiced in various forms for centuries. To sum it up simply you take some time to ask

yourself a series of questions as you reflect prayerfully on your day. It can be done alone or even as a family.

First, you pray for God to shed light on your day. Perhaps take a deep breath, relax, and get comfortable. Thank Jesus for your day. Ask yourself, where did you experience God's presence? Look at your day through God's grace. Imagine having grace glasses on. Then ask yourself, *What can you celebrate? Is there even something you can be proud of? Is there something that needs healing, that makes you sad, afraid, upset?* Tell Jesus about it. Imagine him giving you a hug and taking that weight. (That's my own addition to the examen) and rest, in God's presence.

But perhaps the bottom line is to find a time of stillness, your own time apart to simply be with God. What comes to mind for you when you think of wilderness or solitude? Is it a forest of Sequoia's or an Arizona desert? Or an uninvited confinement during a pandemic?

We could all use some stillness these days. The prophet Isaiah reminds us of God's words: Be still and know that I am God. In times of solitude and stillness we can actually be a bit vulnerable. It is what some have termed a liminal place or a thin place. Spending time in that 'space' can be uncertain, even a fear-provoking place at times. But it can as well be a place and time of transformation much like a cocoon brings forth a butterfly in due course.

Psalms 91 reminds us as well, that we are always cared for and protected under God's wing. Verse 4 is one of my favourites:

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge;

A thin place is where earth and heaven collide. Where is that place for you? How do you find it? Is there a place you like to go to listen in the silence? Or is it while you are doing a quiet task? I love what writer Rachel Naomi Remen said about silence. "Silence is sitting on God's lap."

The early church fathers and mothers headed to the desert, and they were like the prayer warriors of the time. During the Middle Ages there was a group of people who chose to live a solitary life of prayer affiliated with their local church. They were called Anchorites and Anchoresses. It was a rather unusual choice but not uncommon. Julian of Norwich was one of them. She lived during the plague in the 14th century. On her deathbed she had a series of visions of Jesus. But she actually recovered and ended up writing about it and becoming an anchoress. Her writings weren't published until the 1600's because a woman couldn't have their writing published until then. But I digress.

When one became an anchorite, basically a funeral was held for you. The scriptures for such a service were read and they were processed into a tiny cell attached to a church. The door would be locked, and they would stay there for the rest of their life. They would have a servant to bring food. And two windows. One that opened into the church so they could receive communion and another to receive visitors who wanted your prayers and counsel.

Now I'm not suggesting that we become Anchorites! But solitude can be a precious thing. John O'Donohue was an Irish priest, poet and in my opinion a brilliant writer. He referred to solitude as being home and sitting at the hearth of your soul.

There are so many distractions in our world, both images and sounds. There's the internet, the news, the emails, the texts, the googles, the tv, the radio, the cell phone, the superficial chatter around us, the cars going by, or if you are near a truck protest, horns, or the updates on war.

Have you ever noticed the silence when the power goes out? It has its own kind of weight and power. I invite you to take the time to sit on God's lap, to sit by the hearth of your soul. You may come face to face with your weaknesses and temptations, but God's wings and feathers will always cover you and care for you. You are never alone.

➤ *All who hunger, gather gladly* 534

† Offering Invitation

Jesus has called us to follow, to serve and to offer ourselves to him. In thanksgiving let us bring the offerings of our lives to God.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

† Offering Prayer

Holy God, we bring you our gifts with joyfulness, thankfulness and trust. Use them and us to comfort the lonely, to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to bring reconciliation and to build a new world filled with your peace and grace; a place where your purposes are fulfilled for all people. In Jesus' name. Amen

A 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.

Invitation to the Lords Table

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak. Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you the right to come, but because you need mercy and help. Come because you love the Lord a little and would like to love Him more. Come because he loved you and gave himself for you. This is the Lord's table. Our Saviour invites all those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

➤ *With the Lord as my guide*

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Words of institution

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

We are here, because Jesus has invited us.

When Jesus was on earth, he often enjoyed meals with his friends.

On the night before he died,

When darkness was beginning to fall,

He sat at table with the disciples

In an upper room in Jerusalem.

At this last supper,

He broke bread and took wine,

And told his disciples to remember him

By following his example.

Today, we are his disciples, and we are glad to do what he has told us.

As the Lord Jesus took bread, I take this bread and wine to be set apart for holy use.

As he gave thanks, let us give our thanks and praise.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

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.

Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three!

Before all that is, You were God.

Outside all we know, You are God.

After all is finished, You will be God.

You beyond the galaxies,

You under the oceans,
You inside the leaves,
You pouring down rain,
You opening the flowers,
You feeding the insects,
You giving us your image,
You carrying us through the waters,
You holding us in the night,
Your smile on Sarah and Abraham,
Your hand with Moses and Miriam,
Your words through Deborah and Isaiah,
Your hope through Elizabeth and Mary

Therefore with apostles and prophets, and the great cloud of witnesses who live for you beyond all time and space, we join with the whole creation to lift our hearts 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!

In the fullness of time, you gave us Jesus Christ, to be for us the way, the truth, and the life...
Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three!
You being truly and eternal God,
lived as Jesus among us,
took flesh and became human for us and for our salvation.
Holy God, we remember your Son,
His life with the humble,
His welcome of the outcast
His death among the wretched,
His resurrection for us all:
Your wisdom our guide,
Your justice our strength,
Your grace our path to rebirth.
You, loving Jesus,
Healing, teaching, dying, rising,
Sharing our joys and our sorrows
Inviting us all to your feast.

...As we remember his life and death and rising – as we come to this meal prepared for us, we proclaim 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!

To what shall we compare your grace, O God?
Holy God, we beg for your Spirit.
Enliven this bread,
Awaken this body,
Pour us out for each other.
Transfigure our minds,
Ignite your church,
Nourish the life of the earth.
Make us, while many, one body
Make us, though broken, whole,
Make us, despite death, alive.
By these signs of bread and wine,
we recognize the longings of all our hearts
for a time when all humanity will be one family—
Holy Spirit, hover over our lives,
uniting us in these signs and strengthening us
to live the resurrected life of Christ in the world.

**You, Holy God, Holy One, Holy Three, Our Life, our Mercy, our Might, Our Rainbow, our Ark,
our Dove, Our Light, our Treasure, Our Way, our Truth, our Life. You, Holy God, Holy One, Holy
Three! All honour and glory is yours 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

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

† Prayer after Communion

God of Grace, you renew us at your table with the bread of life.
We thank you for your Son Jesus who is our peace.
We thank you that you give us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal kingdom.
May this food strengthen us in love,
And help us to serve you and each other.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory
And grant that we who have received this sacrament
of the body and blood of Jesus our Lord, may abide in him and he in us,
That we may be filled with the power of his endless life,
help us to trust the power of your transforming love at work in us, through us and around us.
Create in us hopeful hearts, as we face our broken and divided world.

We pray for people who face discrimination because of their race, religion, gender, orientation, or ethnicity.

Open our eyes so that we learn to see each other differently, each one as precious to you.

God of mercy, we pray for peace in a world that is marked by so much war, violence, anger, and conflict.

Jesus Christ, light in our darkness, lighten the burdens of those we bring to you in the silence of our hearts.

.... for those who are grieving, those who are afraid.... for those who are sick.... By your Spirit, you have made us one with Christ, and united us with all who share this feast in every time and place.

Send us out as your faithful people, filled with the joy of new and eternal life.

Strengthen us to serve you in the places you have called us to until that day when we feast with you in Glory.

And together we pray as Christ taught us:

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

Blessing

Go out into this week

Filled with the assurance that God loves you.

Overflowing with the abundant life of Jesus Christ,

Replenished with the creative power of the Holy Spirit.

The guarding of the God of life be on you,
The guarding of the living Christ be on you,
The guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you,
To aid you and enfold you,
Each day and each night of your life. Amen

➤ *Go now in peace (round)* **622**