

19 June 2022 – National Indigenous Peoples Sunday / Father's Day

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.

➤ **Don't be afraid (repeat)**

Call to Worship

We gather this morning in Christ's name to explore the workings of our faith, to celebrate God's active presence in our midst. In company with one another, we look to the Spirit's guidance as we strive to serve our Creator. Rejoice in your abundant faith. Welcome to worship!

† Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

Most wonderful God, although the immense universe cannot contain your glory, you come to us not as a stranger but as a friend. Speak each of our names today, O God, that we may be called away from the noise of the world which threatens to overwhelm us. Help us to truly know ourselves – to take responsibility for our own lives – to live boldly and lovingly in the name of Christ.

Most faithful God, we admit to you and to each other that our deeds rarely match our good intentions, nor do our intentions measure up to our creeds. We have named you Father, O God, yet we do not live like your gracious children. We have named Christ as Saviour but have not consistently lived like those who are redeemed. We have named you the ever-present Holy Spirit, but often we live as though you were out of sight, out of mind, out of reach.

Continue to have mercy on us we pray. Forgive us from all plodding or rebelling. Recall us to our true faith, and let these beliefs penetrate deep within the fabric of our goals and motives, so that from the depths of our being we may be inspired to love and serve you. We boldly pray in Jesus' name. **Amen**

God can be utterly trusted. Do not be afraid! If God through Christ says that your sins are forgiven, then they certainly are! The saving grace of the Jesus Christ is with us all. Praise the Lord!

† A Prayer for Fathers based on The Lord's Prayer¹

Our Father who art in heaven, bless the fathers who are on earth – those who work hard every day to light a path and show the way – those who forget and don't perceive the devastation when they leave

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Help the earthly fathers know and praise your name in daily flow – making no difference between the holy realm and worldly scene

¹ Adapted from a prayer written by The Rev. Marilyn E. Thornton, a United Methodist from Tennessee:

Give us this day our daily bread. And for the dads without a job, strengthen their faith in Provider God. Feed them with the bread of love – the wine of justice – the meat of determination – the fruit of the spirit – that they will remember how Jesus gave himself for us, demonstrating that there are many ways for someone to give.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Teach each father the ways of peace – desiring that all violence shall cease – neither tongue, hand, gun, knife – no shock and awe, no fiery towers... Help humanity learn how to forgive.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Guide all parents to be wise. Give them strength of soul to seek the prize of a world without racism or greed – A world where no child is left in need – A world where cheaters cannot win – salvation reigns, there is no sin. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. **Amen**

➤ *Your word, O God, awoke the uncreated* 508

† Prayer for Understanding

Gracious God, we pray that you will come to us in the silence of prayer and in the words of scripture. We seek your nourishment and strength for the journey to which you call us. Open our hearts and minds to your wisdom. Amen

Scripture **1 Kings 19: 1-15a** [OT 326]

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.”

Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.”

Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.”

He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.”

He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus."

Galatians 3: 23-29 [NT 188]

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Luke 8: 26-39 [NT 68]

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him.

For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"-- for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.)

Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss. Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he

gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.

Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

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

Message

I don't know if you know this but June is **Pride Month** in Canada – a time when we celebrate the diversity of LGBTQ+ communities, while acknowledging their history, the hardships they have endured and the progress that has been made. It is a time to remember the impact that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals have had on history. It's a great time to recognize and give thanks for the LGBTQ+ people in your life – family, friends and members of the church. A time to learn a little bit more about LGBTQ+ history, celebrate diversity, and consider the ways that you as an individual, and we as a congregation, can contribute to creating a more inclusive society.

We can all be allies by supporting those who may be struggling with their identity and standing up to intolerance in our community.

A Quadra Village coffee shop set to host a family-friendly drag show this Saturday was targeted with hateful and homophobic phone calls and threats of violence. One caller allegedly suggested someone should "shoot up the place and everyone in it."

The show, *Sashay Cafe: Emo Edition*, was a dance performance – a welcoming, open and accessible venue for artists and performers to showcase their talents.

The Wednesday gun threat was "very upsetting" to cafe staff and scheduled performers, as well as the event's organizer, *For The Love Of Drag*, who ultimately decided to pull the plug.

Several politicians, including our premier, have spoken out against these threats. We also have a responsibility to stand in solidarity with any who have been targeted by those spreading homophobia and transphobia. Hate and violence is something we must always challenge – not only during Pride.

And Pride is not the only thing going on right now. I wonder what is top of mind for you. If I asked you what day it is today or what special events need to be recognized, how would you answer? Would you say it's Sunday – June 19th – Father's Day – National Indigenous Peoples Sunday (June 21st is the actual day) – World Refugee Day (which is June 20th) ...?

Today is all of these and perhaps more since for some it may also be a birthday, a wedding anniversary, the beginning of a holiday or a return from adventure, the anniversary of a death or other significant event – maybe today is nothing special – just the day to rest and reflect – or buy groceries and read your book. What day is it for you?

We applaud fathers today and said a special prayer in their honour earlier in the service. **Father's Day** illuminates and distinguishes fathers as positive role models predicated upon the influence they have on their children and families. We give thanks for fathers, praying that they are a source of joy, hope and encouragement in their connections among us.

Each year on June 20th, the world celebrates **World Refugee Day**. This year, the focus will be on the right to seek safety. Every person on this planet has a right to seek safety – whoever they are, wherever they come from and whenever they are forced to flee.

World Refugee Day is an international day designated by the United Nations to honour refugees around the globe. It falls each year on June 20th and celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution. World Refugee Day is an occasion to build empathy and understanding for their plight and to recognize their resilience in rebuilding their lives.

Whoever they are, people forced to flee should be treated with dignity. Anyone can seek protection, regardless of who they are or what they believe. Wherever they come from, people forced to flee should be welcomed. Refugees come from all over the globe. To get out of harm's way, they might take a plane, a boat, or travel on foot. Whenever people are forced to flee, they have a right to be protected. Whatever the threat – war, violence, persecution – everyone deserves protection.

Elijah, the prophet from our Hebrew Bible reading today, was a man in relationship with God – a man who was faithful and brave. But in this story, he is taking refuge. He has challenged the established power of the day and is now fearing for his life – forced to flee for his own safety. He is afraid and has given up, asking only that God grant him death. Elijah is discouraged and has given up hope.

There is an old fable told about the ad that appeared in the newspaper indicating that the devil was putting all his tools up for sale. They would all be laid out for public inspection with the prices marked on them. Those who went there were able to see that some were very treacherous tools indeed – hate, envy, lying, addictions, adultery, murder, etc. And then quite apart from the others lay another one that looked pretty harmless but had an exceptionally high price tag on it, twice as expensive as the others.

Someone asked, "What is the name of this tool, and why is it priced so high?"

The devil answered, "That's discouragement; it's so worn because I use it so much... on almost everyone. And it's priced so high because it has been so very valuable to me. I find it more useful than all the other tools. I can do more with that one than with all the others. I can pry into a person's heart with that one better than I can with any of the others."

When Elijah is at his lowest point – totally discouraged and seeking safety – God comes to him and gives him hope. Supports him – offering protection and a way forward. May we seek to do the same with those seeking safety – those fleeing conflict or persecution in our own time.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he comments on who we are as children of God through faith – as we are baptised we are changed and called to changed expectations in the world. There is a line from William Blake's poem, *Milton*, that may help us in our understanding of what it means to live in Christ: "*To bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the Not Human*"

To wash off the not human – the old law separated some of Paul's readers from outsiders – from others. Hiding behind the old law, they felt a superiority as God's chosen. The law divided them from most of humanity. Yet Paul says that when we are clothed in Christ – when we are washed in the waters of baptism – a strange thing begins to happen. All the old categories, like Jew and Greek and slave and free and male and female, just fall away. To be baptized is to *wash off the not human* – all the walls that separate us from one another.

Until we are truly able to *wash off the not human* that separates us from those in need, we remain unable to approach the divine. No one is a refugee by choice. Fleeing persecution and conflict, refugees lose their homes, family, friends, work, community and culture. Despite the enormous loss and suffering, refugees persevere to realize a better future. PWS&D assists refugees to resettle in Canada through private sponsorship. Let us remember the plight – the strength, courage and hope – of refugees and displaced people around the world. As we *wash off the not human* our humanity is revealed in its fullness – then we can see the child of God in others and include everyone in the God's loving family.

June 21st is **National Indigenous Peoples Day**. This is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The Canadian Constitution recognizes these three groups as Aboriginal peoples, also known as Indigenous peoples.

Although these groups share many similarities, they each have their own distinct heritage, language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

In cooperation with Indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada chose June 21st, the summer solstice, for National Indigenous Peoples Day. For generations, many Indigenous peoples and communities have celebrated their culture and heritage on or near this day due to the significance of the summer solstice as the longest day of the year.

We know Jesus made a difference wherever he went – just look again at the story in Luke’s gospel today when he reaches out to the troubled and tormented soul in the country of the Gerasenes.²

As Jesus stepped out, a member of the city who had demons met him...

Jesus asked, “What is your name?”

The person said, “Legion” for many demons had entered in.

The Europeans who came to North America in the 16th century called the Aboriginal peoples who greeted them “Indians” because they thought they had arrived in India. Some also became convinced very quickly that these “Indians” were heathens and that many were possessed by demons. They quickly sought to preach the gospel to them and to “drive the demons out of them.” Later, in residential schools, “Indian” children were often forbidden to speak their own language, they were dressed in European-style clothes, and they were sometimes called “little red devils.”

It is time to face the demons that possess us in Canada today. Imagine Jesus stepping out in Canada and encountering an everyday non-Indigenous person. Imagine Jesus asking, “What is your name?” And in a moment of truth this demon-possessed person responds, “My name is Legion, for we are many. Our name is Racism, Bias, Prejudice, Homophobia, Judgement, Intolerance. Our name is ‘May they all go away,’ or ‘What’s wrong with them?’, or ‘Why can’t they be like us?’”

“What is your name?” Jesus asked.

“Legion,” they said, for many demons had entered in.

May God help us this Father’s Day – this day in the midst of Pride Month – this World Refugee Day – this National Indigenous Peoples Day – to drive all the demons away. And even more than that, help us to truly follow Jesus – seeking justice in our society as we act with compassion and outspoken bravery whenever we see evil in the world.

If I asked you what day it is today, how would you answer? I know that it is a special day – **the Lord’s Day** – the day that the Lord has made. I know that it is the day we have been given – like so many other days – to make a difference in the world. Whatever you celebrate today may you encounter God as you go. **Amen**

➤ ***This is the day***

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† Offering

God’s Spirit equips Jesus’ followers to bring healing and hope to the world God loves. The gifts we offer are tangible signs of that healing and hope at work in us and through us, for the sake of Christ our Lord.

² The following imagining is adapted from a reflection offered by The Rev. Marty Molengraaf in recognition of National Aboriginal Day 2010.

Loving God, accept the gifts we offer you, today and every day. Put our time, our talents and our treasure to good use wherever they are needed, for the sake of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers

God of the earth and all its peoples, in Jesus Christ, you proclaimed the good news that true life and peace are found in you. Guide your church to proclaim this good news in ways that bring Christ's reconciling love to divided communities and lives out of joint with each other. Shine your light into the world's hidden corners, exposing violence, exploitation, bigotry. Reveal what dehumanizes the vulnerable and degrades your creation. God of the earth and all its peoples, let your light shine!

God of healing and hope, we pray for all those who are ill or in pain – for the anxious and discouraged – for those facing death or the loss of someone dearly beloved – and for those struggling to make ends meet...

On this National Indigenous Peoples Sunday, we pray for indigenous communities across this land. Grant them wisdom and healing as they address the needs of their people. Bring healing to those who remember painful experiences and build bridges of understanding among us all...

We pray for Presbyterian World Service & Development and its partners as they work to bring healing and hope to places of strife and deprivation. We pray especially for Ukraine trusting that funds raised through our concert last week will aid the work of PWS&D as they seek to make a difference and offer hope. We pray also for those starving in Afghanistan and for refugees throughout the world who may not be receiving the assistance they desperately need...

God of the earth and all its peoples, let your light shine!

God of the faithful future, bless this community of faith and guide us as we plan for the future in changing times. Bless students and teachers as another challenging school year ends and lift the stress from their lives this summer. Give us a time of rest and enjoyment in the summer months and restore our hope and our energy to serve in your world.

We offer all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

Hope in God. Allow the practice of faith to define the person you are. Allow the love of God to shape the person you will become. Now and always serve God with gladness. And may the grace of the risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen