

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.*

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns

*God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.*

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

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship

With different gifts and varied dreams – we come to worship

**We may have lost our trust – misplaced our faith – forgotten our vision**

Yet God welcomes us in this place and enables us to welcome one another

**May we know the love of God as we worship together**

Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

We come before you, O God, in awe of your power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. We come in celebration of the fact that you, O Holy One, should choose to reveal yourself to us in Jesus. We are overwhelmed by such a gracious act and we rejoice over the transformation this gift has brought to our lives and to our world. May our worship be a genuine expression of thanksgiving and praise for your many gifts, O God.

Gracious gift-giving Lord, you call us to live out our faith in ways that honour you and bless our neighbours, and we recognize that worship is an essential part of our faith journey. We believe that what we do here shapes our daily witness to Jesus whose disciples we profess to be. We know that our faith is most visible when we live your way of love, justice and peace – yet it is increasingly hard to resist becoming absorbed into the way of the world.

We hear Jesus' words about the danger of treasuring our earthly goods more than the treasures of your kingdom, and we confess our failure to meet his challenge to live more simply and faithfully. We pray that our hearts will be shaped and reshaped by the unfailing treasures you offer, O God, and that our faithfulness as disciples of Christ will be evident in our worship, our witness, and our way in the world. **Amen**

*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for – so celebrate the assurance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. We are forgiven. Thank God!*

➤ *I heard the voice of Jesus say*

*671*

† Prayer for Understanding

**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. We come convinced of many things but trusting very few. Holy God of limitless surprises, meet us here in this place and in these scriptures. In your Word, may we be assured of all things. Amen**

Scripture    **Psalm 50: 1-8, 22-23**    **responsive/displayed**

The mighty one, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

**Our God comes and does not keep silence, before whom is a devouring fire, around whom is a raging storm.**

God calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that the people may be judged: “Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”

**The heavens declare God’s righteousness, for God alone is judge.**

“Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God.

**I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices; your burnt offerings are continually before me.**

“Mark this, then, you who forget God, or I will tear you apart, and there be no one to deliver.

**Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God.”**

**Luke 12: 32-40**    **[NT 75]**

*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.*

*But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.*

**Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16**    **[NT 225]**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old – and Sarah herself was barren – because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

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

### Message

When God tells Abraham, who is one hundred years old, that at the age of ninety his wife Sarah is finally going to have a baby, Abraham comes close to knocking himself out in hysterics – according to Genesis 17 he *“fell on his face and laughed.”*

When God tells Abraham about this rather late in life, miracle baby, Sarah is hiding behind the door listening in on the conversation. She nearly splits a gut trying not to laugh out loud, even though she denies it when God asks. *“No, but you did laugh,”* God says.

You might think that God would be annoyed about all this laughing at a divine plan, might hold their outburst against them. On the contrary, God tells them the baby is going to be a boy and that they are to name the child Isaac – which, in Hebrew, means *laughter*. Who says God has no sense of humour!

Why did the two old folks laugh? Wouldn't you? They laughed because they knew only a fool would believe that a woman with one foot in the grave was soon going to have her other foot in the maternity ward. They laughed because God expected them to believe it anyway. They laughed because God seemed to believe it. They laughed because they half believed it themselves. They laughed because laughing felt better than crying. They laughed because if by some crazy chance it just happened to come true, they would really have something to laugh about, and in the meanwhile it helped keep them going.

According to Reinhold Niebuhr, *“humour is a prelude to faith, and laughter is the beginning of prayer.”*

***Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***

Faith is laughter at the promise of an unexpected child called Laughter.

Faith is a gift of God that we nourish weekly in our worship – a gift that we constantly renew in Word and Sacrament – a gift that we celebrate in the shared life of God’s people. Faith comes to each of us in different ways and at different times. For some of us, faith is an uncomplicated way of being in the world, and for others it is a journey filled with struggle. Faith is a response to God’s presence in the midst of life.

To say that faith is a gift of God, however, is not to say that it is easily defined. The assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen is challenging for questioning, alert, enlightened minds. We would prefer proof, something concrete. I read an advertisement once for a lecture at an island church: *“New Scientific Evidence Points to God.”* Faith may be the conviction of things not seen, but a little evidence might be comforting.

On the other hand, would evidence ruin it altogether? If you could “prove God” – could work out a formula or take a picture, then faith – the wonderful gift of God that is our “yes” to God who is here with us – faith wouldn’t be the mystery and the joy that it is.

In the late 1800’s John Patton, a Scot from Dumfriesshire, traveled to a group of islands in the South-West Pacific called the New Hebrides, to tell the tribal people about Jesus. The islanders were cannibals, and his life was in constant danger. Patton decided to prepare a translation of John’s gospel but couldn’t find a word in the native language for “belief” or “trust” or “faith”. It must be difficult to trust one another in a cannibalistic society! Eventually, he hit upon the way to find the word he was looking for. One day Patton raised both feet off the floor and sat back in his chair. He asked one of the islanders, *“What am I doing now?”* In reply, the person used a word that means, *“to lean your whole weight upon.”* Patton used this expression. Faith is leaning your whole weight upon Jesus – resting completely in the love of God.

Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process rather than a possession. I have heard it said that faith is not the same as belief because belief is passive, and faith is active. Perhaps the difference is best summed up by a response that Carl Jung gave in an interview to the question, *“Do you believe in God?”* He said, *“I don’t believe, I know.”* Faith is knowing – it is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

That knowing is not always being sure of where you’re going but going anyway – just as Abraham confidently set out for a place, not knowing where the journey would lead. Faith is a journey without maps. It is a journey shot through with laughter because you are traveling a road filled with doubts and traveling with conviction because of faith.

I have faith that my friend is my friend. It is possible that all her motives are ulterior. It is possible that what she is secretly drawn to is not me but my possessions or my attention, or that it is only an illusion that she is drawn to me at all. Nevertheless, there is something about the way I feel when she is around. There is something about the way we can talk to each other about

things that really matter – or things that are totally trivial – or rest in comfortable silence, that makes me willing to be vulnerable with her – my friend.

I can't prove the friendship of my friend. When I experience it, I don't need to prove it. When I don't experience it, no proof will do. If I could think of a test and applied it to this friendship, it would be spoiled.

Another friend from years gone by gave me this plaque that says, "*He who laughs, lasts.*" (I try to read it as ***She*** who laughs, lasts!) If the story of Abraham and Sarah teach us about faith as laughter, then with the laughter of faith comes the strength to last, to endure – the courage to go the distance – the assurance of things hoped for. Laughing with Sarah behind the door is part of living in faith. The laughter of faith that causes us to double over in our leaning into Christ and to fall into the love of God is the hilarity of conviction. The laughter of faith is the joy of knowing – knowing that God is present in our lives and that anything is possible with God. **Amen**

➤ *To Abraham and Sarah*

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† Offering Invitation

The sacrifice that honours God is a thankful heart. So let us present our offering today with thankful hearts, grateful for all God's goodness to us.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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† Offering Prayer

**Blessed are you, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Bless what we offer for your purposes. Give us courage to offer ourselves more fully to you, so that our lives bring you honour and glory through Christ our Lord. Amen**

The Apostles' Creed – an affirmation of faith

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**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

Gathering at the Lord's Table

For those who need, the bread waits. For those who long, the wine lingers. For those seeking transformation, the table beckons. All are invited... not because we have faith, but because we trust – not because we understand, but because we long – not because we know, but because

we are loved – not because we are well, but because we know our need. The table waits, and heaven’s host calls. Our place is here. Come now to the table of our Lord.

➤ *You are holy, you are whole*

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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 your faithful people from every time and place 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!*

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 it 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 Jesus, 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 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 whom the universe could not contain, is now present for us in this bread.

The one who redeemed us and called us by name now reaches out 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

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us.

We thank you for all that money cannot buy:

- sunrise on a cool morning and warm summer nights
- the delicacy of wildflowers and the bold splendor of mountains
- the pleasure of waking after uninterrupted rest
- familiar faces that smile a greeting
- wave from a neighbour or a visit from friends
- human curiosity which itches to explore and make sense of things
- love which spends itself without thought of either comfort or reward
- for the Christ who came among us with a zest for abundant life.

We thank you, great Creator and Redeemer, for joys freely available and for the added joy of knowing they are not just good luck, but your gifts to a much blessed and beloved people. Day by day, O God of both saints and fools, we pray that you will uphold your children in an embrace of immense and dependable love. Grant that we may go into the world to give ourselves for others in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. We bring our prayers in the name of Jesus who encourages us to sing in prayer...

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

### Blessing

Consider the persistent love of God – and whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God through Christ. And may the grace of the risen Christ, the wisdom of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit embrace us all. Amen

➤ *May the God of hope go with us every day 726*