

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.*

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship

This is the house of God, and we are, by grace, the guests.

**We sing to God who is our strength! We shout and cheer the God of deepest joys!**

We lift up our songs, make joy with the keyboard, strum the guitar and let the drums roll!

**This is the house of God and we are, by grace, the guests.**

➤ *Come, let us sing to the Lord our song* 412

Gathering Prayer / The Lord's Prayer / Words of Hope (sung)

Wonderful God! By your Spirit, lead us in this time of worship, that we may be lifted beyond our knowledge and much higher than the words of our prayers. Set us free to indulge ourselves in your hospitality and to enjoy you with uninhibited delight.

Hospitable God, you welcome us as people beloved by you and this privilege begs a like response from us. When we welcome you in our lives, we welcome all others as people beloved by you.

We confess that there are times when we fail miserably. We know that for many this world is indeed an inhospitable place. Forgive us when we keep people at arm's length and regard them with suspicion.

We give thanks that you love us, O God, and give us whatever we need to relate to one another in that same love. Open the door of our hearts as we continue in silent confession...

Hear our prayers, O God, and in your mercy give us peace as we pray together with confidence...***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***

➤ *Lord Jesus Christ, lover of all* (3 times – Taizé style) 492

† Prayer for Understanding

**Gracious God, as we grow in relationship with you, give us courage to follow wholeheartedly. Free us from that which distracts and holds us back so that we may fully embrace the message of your Holy Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen**

Scripture    **Psalm 81: 1, 10-16**            responsive/displayed

Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

**I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.  
Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.**

“But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.

**So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.  
O that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!**

Then I would quickly subdue their enemies, and turn my hand against their foes.  
Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, and their doom would last forever.

**I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”**

**Luke 14: 1, 7-14**    [NT 77]

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely.

When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable.

*When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, “Give this person your place,” and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place.*

*But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

He said also to the one who had invited him, *When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*

## Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16 [NT 227]

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you."

So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

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

### Message

Every week I prepare the announcements which are shared by email, available in print on Sunday morning, mailed to those without email and highlighted most Sunday mornings in worship. Sometimes I am confident that people read and value these announcements – especially when I get notes back commenting on an item or responding to a request – but often I wonder if the announcements go out into the great void of the interweb highway never to be seen again. Maybe, I think, just maybe, people don't recognize the announcements as part of their faithful response to God's call. Perhaps they don't see the connection between the announcements and a life of Christian faith. Well let me spell it out for you!

Each set of announcements begins with a reminder about **worship** – when it is, ways to participate – in-person or online, and often includes an opportunity to participate. This week there is a call for people to volunteer to **read scripture** during our services in October and November. There is also a note about a **pulpit swap** and **multi-church picnic** – a special worship experience – taking place in just two weeks. For several weeks there has been a message about the **Inclusive Christians: Around the Table ecumenical worship and meal** that is part of our ministry at the MultiFaith Center on the University of Victoria campus. Let me know if you can help with that.

Worshipping God within a community of faith – connecting with one another in worship is key to our identity as faithful followers of Christ. Scripture tells us that anyone who claims to love God who is invisible but refuses to deal with a visible neighbour is a liar, for one can only really love a God who is love if one is concretely involved with a real community – a faith community – on earth.

Being the church has to do with belonging. The more we see and experience ourselves as part of something greater than ourselves, the more we belong. Connection with a church community offers us pastoral oversight, the sacraments, a common language, a support network, a family of faith. Over the past few years we have learned how to accommodate even better those who are unable to gather in person. We have become more creative and flexible in how we worship.

The final verses in the passage from Hebrews focus on worship and so underscore the unity of all that goes before. Having called the congregation to give thanks and offer praise to God, the writer spells out the various dimensions of that worship – not just rituals in the sanctuary – the worship of the gathered community is intended to infuse all of life. Thus in our love for each other or for strangers or in our care for those in crisis, we are worshipping God. In our sharing that reflects our trust in God rather than possessions, we are worshipping God. In our faithfulness to our covenants and to the example of those who have gone before us, we are worshipping God.

Next in the announcements I usually place the “**Joys and Concerns**” – our prayer corner. These are specific requests for prayer that come from members of our community of faith. Further along there are “**Daily Prayers**” from The Presbyterian Church in Canada that encourage us to pray for our connected church across the country in various circumstances.

One pillar of our faith – one mark of the Christian – is prayer. In many of the spiritual classics of Christian literature, writers suggest that we will make progress in the spiritual life only if we regularly engage in prayer – private as well as public prayer. This is a reminder to be attentive to our personal relationship with God – to trust and to depend on God. Whether we use devotional websites and books, read scripture, sing or chant, or simply spend a time of intentional quiet in God’s presence, our spiritual health is nourished by growing our relationship with God.

The foundational elements we can draw from Hebrews today are about love and our confidence in God – the sense of loyalty and constancy that comes from a deep, abiding relationship built on prayer. The Hebrews preacher also encourages us to remember those who have spoken the word of God to us – those leaders who stand as an example for us. In them we witness the fruit of an intimate bond with God.

There is a connection with our announcements here too since our **Session meeting** is announced and the proposed **Collaborative Ministry** initiative outlined. These items show our leadership at work in our congregation and in the wider community.

As we grow in relationship with God our inner moral compass is strengthened. How can we be in relationship with the divine while behaving in criminal, destructive or unethical ways? Morality is not about prudishness or self-righteousness but about decency and principles. Christian morality is not necessarily what fundamentalists in the news would have you believe – it is about wholeness and connectedness between one’s relationship with God and how one thinks and acts in the world – integrity.

We honour marriage and seek to be faithful to our marriage covenants – not because we are so wonderful in ourselves but because we have the strength of God to uphold us. Our relationship with Christ helps us to behave with integrity – to act morally – toward one another.

The Hebrews preacher offers words of advice regarding the high moral standards expected of the community of faith – ethical behaviour that is rooted in confidence in Jesus Christ who is *the same yesterday and today and forever*.

Each month our announcements include a list of those who have something to celebrate – **birthdays and anniversaries**. We can reach out to one another to help make those occasions meaningful and special – it is good to be noticed from time to time and to be reminded of all we have to be thankful for. Often the books we read and discuss at **Book Club** – also regularly highlighted in our weekly announcements – encourage us to reflect on our lives, our privilege, our worldview in ways that help us give thanks for God’s gracious abundance.

Cultivating a grateful and generous heart is an important part of our spiritual life that we don’t always give much attention to. We rationalize that our causes are so urgent, we are so wounded, and our world is so bad, that anger and bitterness are justified. We struggle with a mellowness of heart and spirit when we rail against unfairness or are excessive in our piety. We need to learn contentment – to seek a path of radical gratitude as Mary Jo Leddy promotes in her book by that name. Attaining gratitude can free our spirit so that we can appreciate more deeply the many gifts with which we are blessed.

Contentment with what we have is noted most specifically by the preacher in verse five of today’s reading. We do not need to greedily seek more and more to secure our lives. Rather we are to trust in God’s promises of presence and protection. *God will not leave us or forsake us*. Yet, God is not simply present – God is our helper – *What can anyone do to us?*

Maybe the largest portion of our announcements goes to items promoting social justice – I admit to bias here! Right now we have requests to support the **PWS&D Journey for Hope** that will raise funds for food security projects. At other times we focus on local projects often connected with **Our Place Society** – like our potato blitz and the tenant starter kits. I also include a weekly **Mission Moment** shared by the PCC and a monthly **Social Action Spotlight** which focuses this month on protections for children and youth in Canada.

According to the Jewish prophets, where we stand with God depends not just upon prayer and sincerity of heart but also on where we stand with the poor. All Christian churches teach this in one way or the other – and they have also always, in their best expressions, lived it out.

God’s mission in the world is not about church growth but about church giving – not how big we become but how much good we do in the world. To participate in God’s love for the world we need to be committed to act with compassion and justice as we engage the world’s problems: disease, discrimination, climate change, homelessness, natural disaster, human conflict...

The love affirmed in our scripture has an external dimension. The writer mentions that the community of faith is to show care in times of distress – especially to those who are in prison and those who are being tortured. In both cases, the writer underscores the depth of compassion in its sense of suffering-with-others. As we show love to others, we do not wall ourselves off as members of a distinct tribe but show love to the stranger through the gift of hospitality. Paying attention to the stranger – hospitality – remains a vital demonstration of love and is key to our social justice convictions. Hospitality leads to new stories of good news, new possibilities, new life, and new avenues of service. It is our hope and prayer that the renovations to our kitchen and our new flooring will enhance our opportunities to be a place and a community of hospitality.

To live faithfully as followers of Jesus – to love – implies vulnerability and openness to another. Love seeks the well-being of others and is embodied in concrete efforts in their behalf – love means a commitment to social justice. It necessitates a willingness to share more than food and shelter – a willingness to share one’s own self. Christians are called to open our hearts, simply and humbly, and to trust in God. The call to hospitality is a call to ongoing vulnerability with the unknown other. To let a stranger into your house is always a risk. Who knows - these strangers might be *angels*...

You are likely familiar with the song, *They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love*, and today’s reading from Hebrews does a good job of describing what that looks like – how we might be recognized as followers of Jesus – how listeners might be known by the faith they hold. The announcements that come to you each week also describe how we live and respond to Christ’s call as a community of faith. I hope you will see them in a more significant light than you may have previously – the announcements are part of our witness in the world – a record of our love. Amen

➤ *We are one in the Spirit*

471

#### † Offering Invitation

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us: *“Do not neglect to do good and share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”* Let us share what we have as we present our offering, participating in God’s good work.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

306

#### † Offering Prayer

**O God, bless the gifts we bring today, as well as the time, talent, and concern we will offer you this week. We trust that, through the power of your Spirit, these gifts will accomplish more than we can ask or imagine, for Christ’s sake. Amen**

#### † Pastoral Prayers

Good and generous God, in Jesus Christ you came to us, promising us life in abundance. We give you thanks today for the abundant gifts we receive in him: assurance of your love day by day – relief of mercy when we recognize our own failings – hope when things seem bleak – energy to

make a difference through our work and our witness – peace that comes when we trust ourselves in you. These are the gifts that matter, O God, especially when the future seems uncertain.

Generous God, today we pray for all whose lives seem empty – for those whose lives are empty of joy because the going is tough and friends seem far away... because sorrow surrounds them... because hearts are filled with anger or disappointment...

Generous God, we remember before you those whose lives are empty of purpose and those who do not know the respect of their neighbours because they are without work... because they face discrimination... because they have made poor choices and cannot find a way forward...

Generous God, we remember before you those whose lives are empty of peace and hope because they struggle with illness or disability... because they are powerless in the face of violence... because old animosities rankle and opportunity for reconciliation is elusive...

Good and generous God, fill us with the energy and compassion of your Spirit to reach out to those whose lives seem empty. May we become the gift we have received in Jesus. Amen

➤ *To show by touch and word*

**763**

### Blessing

Go into this week nourished by the refreshing love of God – filled with the humble love of Jesus Christ – empowered by the active love of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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

**726**