

Welcome, Announcements, and Land Acknowledgement

I hope and pray that as we gather for worship in Jesus' name, we continue to remember that we are here as guests on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the W̱SÁNEĆ. May we continue asking God to forgive us for injustices we are directly or indirectly part of and may we be led along paths of reconciliation and solidarity.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns *God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

Prayers for our sister congregations involved in collaboration: Trinity, Knox-Sooke, St. Andrew's, and Chinese Church.

➤ *Come, Holy Spirit (Gaither)*

Call to Worship

God is faithful in words, and gracious in action.

Our eyes look to God for nurture in every season.

God is near to all who call out in truth.

God satisfies every living thing.

God watches over all who offer love and praise.

We will praise God's holy name.

† Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

Mysterious and merciful God, we praise you for all the ways you offer us abundant life. When the sun rises and the earth blooms around us, we are thankful for your gift of a new day. When evening falls and we find ourselves in a lonely place, we count on your presence for comfort. For the times you show us the way and give us guidance, we praise you. For the healing you offer when we are broken and hurting, we rejoice. Your grace satisfies us in every situation, and so we worship you – Source of life and love – comfort and courage.

Gracious and merciful God, in Jesus you show us the way of compassion and forgiveness, yet we too often neglect the suffering of others. We blame and judge each other in the moments you call us to act with kindness and mercy. Free us from greed and from grievance. Open our hearts that we may embody Jesus' teachings and walk in his way. Amen

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Know that in Christ, you are forgiven. Forgive one another, and be at peace with God, with yourself and with each other.

➤ *Break now the bread of life*

507

A Word to Ponder... *miracles*

➤ *The Lord is my song*

446

† Prayer for Understanding

Holy God, your Word is bread for our journey. Send us your Spirit so that we may know your wisdom and live it out. Open our hearts that we may gratefully receive your blessings – your energy – your spirit and your love as disciples for you. Amen

Scripture **Isaiah 55: 1-5** [OT 685]

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Romans 9: 1-5 [NT 159]

I am speaking the truth in Christ – I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit – I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Matthew 14: 13-21 [NT 16]

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.

When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick.

When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish."

And he said, "Bring them here to me."

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.

And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

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

Message

When I was in high school, I remember going to Wednesday morning breakfast and communion during Lent. My mother and I went together. I remember that it was a meaningful experience. I was the only teenager there. A small group gathered in a meeting room at the church and shared juice, coffee, fruit and muffins or biscuits or something like that for breakfast and at some point during the meal the minister began The Lord's Supper. It was only later that I wondered about why my mother was there. She was never an overly or overtly religious person. I am guessing that I wanted to attend, and she came with me – to do something special with me. With five children in the family, she tried to do that – to spend some individual time with each of us – to strengthen her relationship with each of her children. The simplicity of the experience sticks in my mind – the naturalness of it and its power to influence the day – the week – the season – maybe it influences me even now.

In our communion liturgy, we are invited to The Lord's Supper not because of our strength or goodness or worth but because we are in need of mercy and help – because we want to be the disciples Jesus calls us to be. We come because we thirst. Isaiah says that what God freely offers to us is the only thing that truly satisfies that for which we long. Paul insists that God saves us and calls us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to divine purpose and grace. We are saved and called to discipleship through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we celebrate in Holy Communion today.

There are many important theological themes addressed by the sacrament. Three of them are identified by the names we use for this ritual celebration. When we call the sacrament, The Lord's Supper, we focus on remembering Jesus' life, death and resurrection. When we call the sacrament, Eucharist, we focus on giving thanks to God for the gift of grace that comes to us in Jesus Christ – reminding us that we are God's beloved children. When we call the sacrament, Holy Communion, we focus on the presence of Christ with us and in us – on the family of faith that comes from our relationship with Christ and, through Christ, with one another.

Communion is not only a declaration of our love or faith, but also a declaration of God's love for us – God's love which comes first and which we cannot earn. Today as we celebrate and remember God's promises with one another, we celebrate the glory of our unity in Christ.

That unity is part of the miracle of the story from Matthew's gospel today. In it the disciples recommend that the people leave the gathering to go buy food for themselves – food that Isaiah might suggest will not satisfy. Instead, Jesus takes the apparent scarcity of the people and tells them to share it communally – to come and eat of abundance even though they seemingly have little or nothing in their pockets. As they share, they become one body in Christ.

The celebration of communion is one of the ways that Presbyterian congregations in Canada – even in our own region – express their diversity. I don't know of Presbyterian congregations that celebrate the sacrament weekly as Calvin would have recommended. Many have a monthly service of communion as we do at Knox and others remain attached to quarterly communion – a practice that Jean Calvin, reformation leader and father of Presbyterianism, was not in favour of but compromised to.

According to Calvin, the Lord's Supper is *a bond of love* intended to produce mutual love among believers – to inspire thanksgiving and gratitude. Because it is at the very heart of Christian worship, Calvin argued that it should be observed whenever the Word is

preached, or *at least once a week*. Calvin considered the Lord's Supper to be a divine gift given by Christ himself to nourish and strengthen faith. As such, it is not to be neglected, but rather celebrated often and with joy.

The crux of Calvin's spirituality can be understood as mystical union – becoming one with God in Christ – being in communion with God. His desire for weekly celebration of the Eucharist takes on a new significance when we see it in this light. If the spiritual journey is a process of growing into oneness with Christ, and if the real presence of Christ comes to us in the shared meal of thanksgiving, then it is natural to hope to participate in The Lord's Supper on a frequent basis.

In Jesus, divinity takes on flesh – embodies itself – and therefore is human. This is the reality of Christ – this is the incarnation. Does God become less or, in the embodiment, does God become what was intended in creation from the outset? Was the image of divinity in humanity Christ-like before its distortion in disobedience and sin – self-elected distance from the Holy One? As we seek to be in union with Christ isn't that hungering for right relationship with God a return to God's creative intent?

We do not need to seek to be something other than truly human, as if it were something to be despised – truly human is the miracle of God's creative imagination. As we live into that inspired hope, we discover the divinity that is already there despite our brokenness – the grace of holiness that we have been blessed to receive – the gift of Christ's divine self that has been – and is being – poured into us and is now one with us. Therefore, the spiritual life we seek is not only to grow in awareness of God's presence, but also to grow into the image of the divine for which God hopes and in which God calls us to participate.

We grow into this divine image of God's creative imagination as we seek God's presence in all aspects of our lives – as we nurture a transformative relationship with our creator through prayer and sacrament. Calvin says that prayer *"is the chief exercise of faith, by which we daily receive God's benefits."* [a personal paraphrase of the key points in Calvin's Institutes III.xx.1-20] He would maintain that those who partake of the bread and wine of the sacrament in faith, truly partake of the body and blood of Christ. Calvin explains this in terms of the believer's mystical union with Christ – the Lord's Supper strengthens our ongoing union with Christ. As we come through Jesus to God in prayer and sacrament we participate in the life of Christ and become one with him.

Calvin argued that the eating of the body of Christ is the result of faith – meaning that as we consume the elements of the sacrament the Holy Spirit pours the life of Christ into them and therefore into us.

Our understanding of incarnation is that *God has become one with us so that we may become one with God.* Part of the liturgy when the bread and wine is shared in communion uses the words: *"In it (the bread and wine) God comes to us so that we may come to God."* This a deep interpretation of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper clearly supported by Calvin and the Biblical text – the incarnation, available to us in word (scripture) and form (sacrament).

Jesus has dinner with all sorts in the gospel accounts and invites them to share in his abundance, not because they are worthy but because God in divine graciousness wants everyone to be included – wants us to be included. We are the ones Isaiah shouts out to – come you who are thirsty and have no money. We are the ones sharing the miracle of that long ago picnic – loaves and fishes with baskets left over. We are the ones that Jesus invites to his table – called to take part in the blessing of the Lord's bounty.

...a festival of friends – where we gather around the table with all our hopes and dreams, longing for a glimpse of the holy. Come to the table – all are welcome. Christ invites us...

We are invited to the thanksgiving table – Eucharist – to the Lord's Table of remembrance – to Holy Communion where we participate as a family of faith in the mystery and miracle of becoming one with God in Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

➤ *As water to the thirsty*

688

† Offering and Prayer

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

306

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

We are grateful O God of all creation, for all your blessings. Use the gifts we offer to spread your goodness in Jesus' name. Let your Spirit work through us so that your goodness will move through us into the world wherever we go. Amen

Vine and Branches¹ - an affirmation of faith

We believe in God, the Root of all living, Creator of all things.

We live in Christ Jesus, God's Son, who loved all people and who makes us one in his love. He suffered, died and was raised to new life. In his death and resurrection,

¹ Methodist – General Board of Discipleship

we are also raised to life that is transformed. Christ is our Vine, and we are his branches; and without him we cannot live.

We live by the Holy Spirit, flowing through us so that we may bear fruit for God, the fruit of love. In the Spirit we are one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.

We trust in the one holy church, the communing of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the mystery of resurrection, and the grace of eternal life.

Gathering at the Lord's Table

The celebration of communion is always a festival of friends – where we gather around the table with all our hopes and dreams, longing for a glimpse of the holy.

It is here, where bread is broken and the cup is shared, that we can be most truly ourselves – seeing ourselves and others as children of the living God. Here, that which is earthly becomes divine and that which is human becomes more than has ever been dreamed.

Come to the table – all are welcome. Christ invites us to meet him here.

➤ *You satisfy the hungry heart*

538

God be with you.

And also, with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to our Creator God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise...

Gracious and loving God, we praise and thank you – you are the creator of all goodness and the source of abundance...

In the beginning, your Spirit danced on the waters and brought us life. In your generosity, you created a garden of delights and nourishment – you called us to live with respect in creation and to care for one another.

You brought your people out of slavery into a land of milk and honey – flowing with streams of living water and planted with groves of olive trees.

When we turned away from you – living in greed and violence – you sent us prophets to call us back and remind us to live for a day when no one would be hungry and we would live together in justice and peace.

And so, with every generation before us, with 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!

Generous God, we give you thanks for Jesus, who came to live with us...

We remember how he called his disciples to follow him and become fishers of all people. He told stories and taught us to pray. We thank you that he loved eating and drinking around tables where strangers became friends and where outcasts were included.

Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, but you raised him from the dead – and like his disciples we meet him again in the breaking of bread as we gather around his table.

We remember and give you thanks, O God, that as he sat at the table with friends – sharing the fruit of the vine and the harvest of the fields – he took bread, blessed it, broke it and shared it, saying: "Take – eat – this is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me."

When supper was over, 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."

As we gather in the promise of Christ, 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!

Pour out your grace upon us, O God, and upon the simple gifts of this meal. Send your Spirit on us and on what we do here as we gather at the Lord's Table to eat and drink of the living Word.

May we be one in Christ and one with your vision of peace and plenty. 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 breathed on the first disciples is present for us in this bread. The one whose Spirit stirred the Church at Pentecost revives us 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.

Please come forward to receive Holy Communion – everyone is welcome at this table. If you are unable to come to the front, please signal an elder who will come and serve you. We use gluten and dairy-free bread. Both juice and wine are available. Pre-packaged elements are provided on request.

† Prayer after Communion

Loving God, we offer thanks this day for the church – body of Christ, vessel of the Spirit, family of faith, witness in the world. Help us consider Jesus in all we do, letting our decisions be made as with his mind – our relationships formed as with his heart – our deeds done as with his hands. Encourage us to go where the Spirit moves us – individually and as communities of faith – opening ourselves to possibilities of service that you imagine for us and equip us to accomplish. Enable each one of us to be bold witnesses, for we know that the world needs good news, and we sense in our spirits the importance of conveying your love to all.

Holy God, in gratitude for this meal – these people – we give ourselves to you. Take us out to live a changed people because we have shared the Living Bread and cannot remain the same. Ask much of us – expect much from us – enable much by us – encourage many through us. And may we live to your glory in all we do. Amen

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

➤ ***Draw the circle wide***

Blessing

Go into this week, directed by the timeless promises of God, renewed by the healing touch of Jesus Christ and energized by the creative power of the Holy Spirit. May God our Maker fill you with confidence – Christ our Saviour bring you peace and comfort and the divine Spirit renew your energy to greet the gift of each new day.

➤ ***Jump with joy*** **406**