

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

*As we seek to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament current and historic injustices on this land. We know we gather today as guests on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ. We live here not knowing the full story of the land and its people but seeking to learn more, and, by the grace of God, trying to walk a more hopeful and helpful path.*

□ **Come, Holy Spirit (Gaither)**

Call to Worship (adapted from #419)

Our God is medicine for us when we are sick – strength when we need help.

**Our God is life itself when we fear death – the way when we long for heaven.**

Our God is light when all is dark.

**Our God is food when we need nourishment.**

We come to worship our healing God!

□ **The clay-stained hands of love**

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† Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

Loving God, you have led us to this place, not to shield us from heartache and the pain of human life, but to heal us and inspire us, to gently redirect us, until we see the world as you do and love it with your love.

You are always true to us in love O God, and we are left, wanting to say that we are sorry for our faithlessness to you and to one another – for our forgetfulness of the poor and the broken – for our failure to cherish your creation. Give us life, O God, to risk and to change – enable us to do what you have called us to do – to risk and change that we might live. Amen

*We are forgiven – washed, softened, pried wide open, enlarged... into grace. Thanks be to God!*

† Prayer for Understanding

**Lord, grant that we may hear and learn from the wisdom of your Holy Word. Let it be our guide today and every day. Amen**

Scripture **Jeremiah 30: 12-14a,17a [OT 733]**

*For thus says the Lord: Your hurt is incurable, your wound is grievous. There is no one to uphold your cause, no medicine for your wound, no healing for you. All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you...*

*For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the Lord...*

**Proverbs 13: 12 [OT 595]**

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

**Proverbs 17: 22 [OT 600]**

A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.

**Proverbs 18: 14 [OT 600]**

The human spirit will endure sickness; but a broken spirit—who can bear?

**Luke 4: 38-44 [NT 62]**

After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. Demons also came out of many, shouting, "*You are the Son of God!*" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, "*I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.*" So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

"A Question of Technique" (an imagined conversation between Peter and Jesus)

## Message

Jesus heals by the power of God – not through specific techniques, poultices, practices or incantations – but as the Holy Spirit enables him to do so. Jesus heals by loving each person as an individual – someone created by and significant to God.

There is much talk about disease and healing in the scripture – both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament. Jeremiah talks about our own inability to fix what ails us apart from God – God will restore health. In the selected verses from Proverbs – and there are many more to choose from – several clichés about sickness, medicine and healing are offered. I chose the Luke passage because of the connection to the reader's theatre piece you just heard... *"all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them."* I could have selected from any number of healing stories, like the one about the hemorrhaging woman in which the woman touches Jesus and is healed.

Award winning transgender poet, speaker and theologian, Jay Hulme, offers this spin on that familiar story with this poem entitled "Jesus at the Gay Bar" ...

He's here in the midst of it –  
right at the centre of the dance floor,  
robes hitched up to His knees  
to make it easy to spin.

At some point in the evening  
a boy will touch the hem of His robe  
and beg to be healed, beg to be  
anything other than this;

and He will reach His arms out,  
sweat-damped, and weary from dance.  
He'll cup the boy's face in His hand  
and say,

*my beautiful child  
there is nothing in this heart of yours  
that ever needs to be healed.*

Jesus defies expectations and "rules" – which he so regularly does – and instead provides healing and love to the hemorrhaging woman. But, in this poem, there is no healing in the traditional sense, because Jesus states *"there is nothing in this heart of yours that ever needs to be healed."* I think the healing offered in the poem is more subtle – perhaps not the healing you expect. The boy's queerness is not perceived as illness and does not need to be healed. It is in being accepted and valued for who he is that the boy in the poem, and hopefully each one of us, is restored.

When we gather as a community of faith we think about and take steps toward healing and health all the time. We are concerned with wellness – in our own body, mind, and soul – in the body, mind, and soul of those whom we know and love – in the body, mind, and soul of our broken world. We call for health and wellness in our congregational and welcome statements on our website and strive to support one another in ways that promote physical, mental and spiritual health.

In the past we have hosted information sessions about how to prevent falls and other injuries in our homes. We try to stay connected with one another and the needs of our local and world community – thinking especially about the wellbeing of the most vulnerable.

Next week we begin gathering socks to warm the toes and hearts of those in our city who may live or spend much of their time on the streets. It is a small token of our concern and compassion reflecting our solidarity with these people in poverty. In this endeavour we partner with *Our Place* – a local organization that can do much more than we can do on our own. Like Jesus, this society helps by the power of the Holy Spirit as it reaches out in love and care to each person as an individual – created by and significant to God.

Later in the service today we will review and practise our emergency evacuation. It is an inconvenience to get up, file out and ensure that everyone is safe – but it is necessary for us to do this from time to time to care for one another as a community of faith. We need to know that we can get to safety in case of fire or other dangers. We need to know that each one of us can get out on our own or with the help of someone in the seat nearby. We need to think about how we can be helpful to one another. So yes, it may be inconvenient, but we are going to do it anyway!

From time to time there is an injury or medical incident among the congregation that happens when we are gathered together. Such events are unsettling for everyone, but we are thankful for those in our midst with medical training, experience and clear heads who offer needed assistance in a crisis. We also have a first aid kit with some basic supplies – do you know where it is? Our building is equipped with fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, fire alarms and many exits. How familiar are you with these safety features and your exit path during an emergency? The pamphlet you received today is intended to help us all stay safe – to promote health and wellness.

Aside from these concerns for our wellness and safety we need to think about what it means for us to be healthy as a community of faith. We all know that it is all too easy for organizations to lose focus – for personalities to clash – for tempers to flare or apathy to settle in. We would like to think that because we are a church – people gathered to worship and promote God's mission of love for all creation – that we would be a

naturally healthy organization... but we are, after all, only human! Sometimes, churches too become dysfunctional and unhealthy. I think we are fortunate at Knox that our session works well together, that our elders rise to the challenge of the many leadership responsibilities before them. I see people sharing concern for one another – praying for one another – helping one another. We are attentive to the concerns of the poor in our city and in the world. People seem happy to help with worship, hospitality, and teaching as they are able. As your minister, I feel supported, cared for and valued. We may be imperfect, but I would call us a healthy community of faith overall.

Just to be sure though, I did a bit of research. Here are some marks of a healthy community of faith that confirm for me that we are well on our way...

- respect that each person is unique – believes in their own way.
- appreciate diversity and protect each other from abuse, manipulation and coercion. The freedom of the person is valued over commitment to the group.
- learning is invitational rather than demanding – freedom of thought and speech are encouraged.
- burdens are voluntarily shared.
- value other people and other faiths – endeavouring to relate to everyone in positive ways.
- whether welcoming the stranger or blessing the departing, gracious hospitality is offered.
- embrace personal and communal change as necessary and vital for continued wellbeing.

I wanted to remind us of our health and wellness today – as individually and as a community of faith. I wanted us to give thanks and to celebrate the gift of healing we received in Christ Jesus. We know that Jesus heals us body, mind, and soul – not by magic spell or as a reward for religious devotion but by the grace of God. We are healed and invited to participate in that healing by the power of the Holy Spirit as we love each person as an individual – created by and significant to God. **Amen**

□ *Christ's is the world*

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### Offering and Prayer

In the church we receive the legacy of faithfulness offered to us across many generations. Our gifts continue to build up the inheritance we share in for generations we will never meet, so that they will meet Jesus and reach out to others in his name.

□ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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**Faithful God, we offer humble thanks today for your generosity to us through the church that bears Christ's name. Receive our gifts as tokens of our love and loyalty. Use them to sustain your mission in the world in ways we cannot yet imagine – in a future that you are creating through Christ Jesus. Amen**

† Pastoral Prayers / The Disciples Prayer (enfleshed)

Loving God, giver of every useful and beautiful gift, you have made us shareholders in the Spirit and investors in the Gospel of Christ. Encourage us to so speak and act and pray, that all we hold in trust may be used more wisely than our own wisdom could direct, and more lovingly than the small resources of our compassion would allow.

Help us O God, as followers of Jesus, to multiply all that you have given us, to risk spreading your word and perhaps see it misunderstood, to gamble by loving those whom others think worthy only of hate, to take chances by doing good to those who have not done good to us. Help us be faith-filled and to desire to increase your glory and your righteousness in this world. Make us ones who share in both word and deed that which you have shared with us...

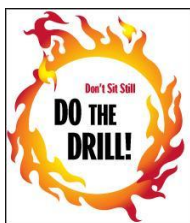
We pray, O God, for the church today – that it may encourage people to discover, develop, and use all their gifts, those of nature and those of grace...

We pray for those who are poor in body or in spirit... for those who are oppressed and heavy-laden.... for those who are sick or in despair... minister O God by your Spirit, and by us, to all those for whom we have prayed – and help us walk faithfully in the path of our Lord Jesus Christ – who encourages us to pray boldly with voices united... ***Mother of us all, who dwells within and beyond, sacred is your name. May your holy vision for collective flourishing come to fruition among us. May your dreams of justice, love, compassion, and connection be enfleshed on earth. Provide us today with what we need to be nourished in body, soul, and heart. Forgive us for the harm we cause as we seek to forgive those who have harmed us. Lead us away from everything that destroys and liberate us from the hands of evil. For you are the ultimate source of hope. Your power-with exceeds all power-over. Your presence incites eternal wonder. All praise to you, our comfort and strength. Amen***

□ ***Jesus' hands were kind hands***

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Words to Ponder... health and wellness



Emergency Evacuation Review and Practice!

*Please take time to carefully review the Evacuation Plan you received this morning. Think about your emergency exit route. Do you know where the nearest fire extinguisher is? Could you locate the first aid kit?*

### Blessing

May the God who shakes heaven and earth, whom death could not contain, who lives to disturb and heal us, bless you with power to go forth and proclaim the Gospel. And may the grace of the Living Lord, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit embrace us all. Amen

□ *We will go out with joy*

**539 (PCUSA)**