

01 September 2024 – Communion/Christian Camping

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement **Kittie**

We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also know we are here as guests on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ – Esquimalt and Songhees nations. 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.*

➤ *Come, now is the time to worship*

Call to Worship

This is the day that the Lord has made!

We will rejoice and be glad in it!

We are a community of faith created in God's name.

We will love, learn, and share our faith together.

Let us give thanks to God in this time of worship.

Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

Faithful God, in your creation, you have made the sun to shine and the rain to fall – the vines to bear fruit and the fields to produce good things. You alone are our strength and sanctuary – you alone bring us rest and comfort. We turn to you, marvelling at your wisdom – seeking to learn your purpose for our lives.

We come to worship this day to celebrate how we can hear and do your word. As you love us, help us to love others. We offer you our praise and thanksgiving.

When we say one thing and do another, we pray you will forgive us. When we know the truth but do not act on it – when we fail to notice the overwhelming love you have for all people – merciful God, forgive us. When we are quick to speak and slow to listen, rather than the other way around – forgive us, O God, and restore us to right relationship with you and one another. We offer our prayers and our confession in the name of Jesus, the Christ. Amen

The Word of God is active – going forth to free, forgive, comfort, and heal. Let that word be in you now – assuring you of a new beginning through Christ Jesus, our salvation.

Prayer for Understanding **Mary**

God of Word and Wisdom, send your Spirit upon us today as we hear the Scriptures read and interpreted. Help us be doers of your Word – not mere listeners – so that our lives reflect the truth we meet in Jesus, your living Word. Amen

Scripture **Song of Solomon 2:8-13** (OT 623)

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice.

My beloved speaks and says to me: *“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; or now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”*

James 1:17-27 (NT 229)

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act –they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Listen to what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.

Message (including a few words from some enthusiastic campers!)

James names God: *the Father of lights* – the creator of the sun and the moon and the stars in the heavens – Creator of all that is. God creates the beauty of the natural world, God creates each one of us to live in it and God desires much for us and from us. *The Father of lights* breathes life into us by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we will become the very best of creation, the cream of the crop, the fulfilment of God's desire. James reminds his community of this – reminds them of who they are – whose they are. They are – we are – God's creation. It is easy to forget in the routine humdrum of life that God fills us with *the word of truth* and hopes what is best for us.

How can we remind ourselves that we are – like the sun and the moon and the stars – created by God for God's purposes? For many people, camping is how they do that and for Christians, church camp is a way to reconnect with both creation and their faith.

Camping has been part of the Canadian Christian experience for more than a hundred years. One source I found *described how Presbyterian churches joined with other denominations to sponsor "fresh air camps" in the late 1800's. These camps gave urban young people an opportunity for play and moral instruction outside the cities.* My guess is that camps were at the height of their popularity in the 1950's when mainline churches were flourishing.

Church camping is a different kind of camping, in that the focus is on God as the centre of all life, and the focal point of every day's activities. In a 1958 book called, Camping Together as Christians, we read that *church camp [can] provide an experience in Christian living... helping campers to encounter God at work in the processes of creation... Fellowship is real because [participants] come to know one another with a depth of feeling seldom experienced elsewhere within the church.* There is something special about the camp experience, whether a summer day camp, family camp, youth event, or retreat – it is one of the paths of our Christian journey.

Church camp is one of the most successful modes of Christian education and leadership development. The growth of Christian faith and character through living together in a camp community is carried back to individual congregations by campers and staff in the form of on-going service in the name of Jesus Christ. I have heard it said that one week at camp is equal to a year of church school!

Christian camping is special. It provides the opportunity to see life just a little differently than we do every day. Each time a camp begins a unique Christian community is born and sustained during the extent of the time together. Camps are not just for children and youth. More and more adults are seeking camp and retreat experiences. It is time away from regular lives, sustained opportunity for building relationships, and the chance to rejoice in the beauty of God's creation. Central is the caring, loving and learning place camp becomes for all who experience it.

Camps and retreats have long been defining experiences designed to encourage people to hear, respond and develop as spiritual leaders called to inspire and lead others in lives of love. Part of their purpose is to help participants connect the learning and transformation at camp or on retreat with new ways of being and living in the world.

Bruce and Ruth McCowan are some of the most avid campers I know, and they are keen to share their thoughts on church camping with you...

Jean and Arthur Marcellus shared these reflections about church camping...

Camp VIP is an opportunity for anyone from our Vancouver Island Presbyterian Churches (Camp VIP) to camp and have fellowship together. Camp VIP had been a camp for children and teens for many years, along with a Family Camp at Rath Trevor during the long weekend of August. We now have Family Camps for everyone, three times a year in June, July and August.

Jean had her first experience at Family Camp in 1990 when Andrew McCowan was an infant! She remembers it so well. Jean went on to be a counsellor, a director and kitchen staff for the children's side of Camp VIP. Arthur heard about Camp VIP when his boys came home all smiles talking about their new friends, the fun games and showing us their cool t-shirts and craftwork. Soon after, Arthur was volunteering as a dishwasher and enjoyed spraying any of the kids who just had to poke their head in the kitchen window!

They love Camp VIP because it is an amazing opportunity to see friends old and new each year, catch up on news about family and friends and share their walk with the Lord. They have so many friends from all over Vancouver Island because of Camp VIP.

At Camp VIP you can take your pick of activities - crafts, board games, going for walks, swimming, bicycling, reading, no-run baseball, croquet, lots of visiting and conversation, singing, praying, campfire, smores, and most importantly, a theme speaker at Circle Time each evening, which strengthens Christian faith. Friends often inquire, *"How many*

camping trips were you on this year?" We always start by saying, "Well, first of all we went to three Church Camp VIPs." "Oh what's that?" and then the real conversation starts! Jean and Arthur keep coming back because they can't imagine what a year would be like without going to camp. Something would be missing, big time, in their yearly adventures!

The banner on display today was created at the July camp this year, having received advice from Kitty Ure and encouragement from Laura. The children and the 'big' children really 'got into' the paint and the placing of their hands. There are some direct similarities to the lovely banner we have in our foyer.

If you enjoy camping, meeting other fellow Presbyterian's, and hearing the Word of God in the great Vancouver Island outdoors, have a look at the Camp VIP website for more information and registration.

In James' letter we read about a community of faith and how it needs to behave. We read about a community that has been blessed with *the implanted word that has the power to save your souls*. A community that needs to connect the truth it has heard and the salvation it has received with its way of being and living. We are reminded that doing is as integral to faith as hearing – that religion that is all talk and no action is worthless.

There is a connection here with the camp experience. There is sharing and learning from one another – expressing thoughts and deep feelings, not only about our faith, but also about each other that creates a special kind of fellowship, the same kind that Christ created with his disciples – a closeness achieved through community with Christ which is a totally different closeness from that experienced apart from Christ. Through the gift of that safe and nurturing community it is possible to move beyond words to action – to risk more than might have been risked otherwise – to become *not hearers who forget but doers who act* – and to be blessed in the doing. **Amen**

➤ *I'm gonna live so God can use me*

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Offering and Prayer

The Letter of James records that every generous act comes from God. So let our offering today reflect God's generosity and our gratitude for every gift we have received through God's faithfulness to us.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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Great is your faithfulness, O God, and so we offer to you a portion of what we have received through your unfailing goodness. Bless these gifts and our lives, so that your love is proclaimed to the world through all we accomplish in the name of Jesus Christ, our friend and saviour. Amen

The Apostles' Creed

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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

Invitation to 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.

➤ *Worship the Lord*

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† Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the Holy One 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, for 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...

➤ **829** ***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.***

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...

➤ **523** ***Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.
Christ has died; 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. Amen

Sharing Bread and Cup

*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. You may choose either juice, wine.*

*The one whom the universe could not contain is present for us in this bread.
The one who redeems us and calls us by name now meets us in this cup.
In these gifts God comes to us so that we may come to God.
The bread of life – the cup of joy – we remember and share with thanksgiving.*

Prayer

God of sweet bread – God of tart juice and wine – we give thanks that you have fed us again. So much more is received than just what we consume. So much more is absorbed than just what we taste. We give thanks for each person present with us today. Bind our hearts by the receiving of this sacrament. Bind us firmly with all who do this in remembrance of you. Bind us in your Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name as we sing together...

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

- ***To show by touch and word*** **763**

Blessing

You are the fulfillment of God's purpose, borne by the word of truth to be the first fruits of God. Do what God gives you to do in this world with joy, in the company of God's people, and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit. May the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, the generous love of God, and the continuing support of the Spirit embrace us all. Amen

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