

20B Pentecost / October 6, 2024 / World Communion Sunday

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

the Rev. Mitch Coggin

Prelude *All' Elevazione #2 by Domenico Zipoli*

Call to Worship: (Responsive)

St. Andrews Reader: Dirk Ryneveld

From north and south, from east and west, we gather: God's people are called to the Table where grace nourishes us.

From nearby to distant cities, we gather; from single households to apartment dwellers: God's people are called to community, where we live and serve one another.

From every class, every race, every status; God's people are called to witness to God's hope, to offer peace to a shattered world.

In this place and in this time, may the words of our mouth and may the thoughts of our heart please God. Our Rock and my Redeemer.

1st Hymn # 410 *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

St. Andrews Reader: Dirk Ryneveld

Ever present God, when You invite us to Your table, You ask us to come with clean hands and clean hearts. You ask us to come in peace, seeking reconciliation with You and with one another. We confess that the Church has not always sought reconciliation within or beyond its walls. Today, in this moment guide us to hand over our broken relationships, disagreements and disappointments that keep us from living in Your peace. Free us from the burdens we carry, so that we may be a source of peace in this troubled world in the name of Christ who is our peace.

Declaration of Forgiveness

St. Andrews Reader: Dirk Ryneveld

Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness and truth is stronger than lies. God's love never ceases, and God's mercy never ends. Live in the confidence that we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

2nd hymn # 528 *Jesus Calls Us Here to Meet Him (Balm in Gilead)*

Prayer for Illumination

Knox Reader: **Heather Anderson**

God of New Possibilities, plant new seeds of faith, hope and love in our hearts this day. Open our minds and allow Your Word to grow within us as we hear Your scripture read. Amen

1st Scripture: Romans 14:7-19 [pg. 163 NT]

Knox Reader: **Heather Anderson**

For we do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, *"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God."* So then, each one of us will be held accountable.

Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother or sister.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who considers it unclean. If your brother or sister is distressed by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let your good be slandered. For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who serves Christ in this way is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Choral Anthem: *Taste and See*

Douglas Nolan/Rebecca Fair

2nd Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (pg. 174 NT) Knox Reader: **Heather Anderson**

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says *"Let Jesus be cursed!"* and no one can say *"Jesus is Lord"* except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who

activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

The Word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God

Meditation: *For the Common Good* the Rev. Laura Kavanagh

After we read these powerful words from two of Paul's letters what is there left to say? Is there anything in this that we have not heard before? The thing is that either you get it, or you don't – and if you do get it, you may struggle with living it out – certainly you will struggle with those who don't seem to grasp the import of what Paul is expressing. Each one of you knows you could walk into any Presbyterian Church in Canada and find those who understand and embrace these words from Paul's letters to the churches in Rome and Corinth. You will also find those who don't – people who judge too readily – who are constant stumbling blocks to the harmony of the church – people who see the gifts they have received as their own accomplishments – who dismiss the service of others because it does not meet their expectations – people who sneer at activities that are not their idea – people who are not focused on that which makes for peace – for mutual upbuilding and the common good. And the Presbyterians are not unique in this – Anglicans, Catholics, Baptists, Uniteds, and non-denominational community churches all suffer with the same dysfunction.

Despite our imperfections as disciples today we rejoice in Christian unity and ecumenical cooperation as we celebrate the eucharist on this World Communion Sunday. The history of the day is interesting to note...

The tradition was begun in 1933 by Hugh Thomson Kerr who ministered in the Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Apparently, Dr. Kerr first conceived the notion of World Communion Sunday during his year as moderator of the General Assembly (1930). The idea grew out of the Division of Stewardship at Shadyside. It was their attempt to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity – in which

everyone might receive both inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is, and how each congregation is interconnected one with another.

It was then adopted throughout the US Presbyterian Church in 1936 and subsequently spread to other denominations. In 1940, the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches), endorsed World Communion Sunday and began to promote it to Christian churches worldwide.

It is this concept of resolving division and honouring our interconnectedness that I want to follow up on today.

What Paul is seeking to do in this letter is a major task of each ruling and teaching elder as they participate in the building up of the community of faith within a context of diversity. Paul's constant goal is to call the Corinthians to understand their corporate existence as the church. When we read his words, we must hear ourselves addressed *as the church* – not as individuals – not even as distinct congregations – but as members of a community that confesses "*Jesus as Lord*." Paul is working toward bringing the disorderly, siloed, divisive and self-centered worship practices of the Corinthians under control so that the church as a whole can be nourished. When we listen to what Paul has to say we need to first reflect on what it is that interferes with our shared life – what diminishes our coming together as a community of faith – what sucks the life out of us. We need to look at our own dysfunction and determine what we do that is not for the common good – what does not make for peace and mutual upbuilding.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians specifically addresses a community experiencing conflict, where some who thought of themselves as spiritually enlightened or specially gifted, looked down upon those they thought less spiritual or not as gifted. In particular, the gift of *glossalia* or speaking in tongues was prized in Corinth as the crowning and confirming gift of the Spirit. Paul, however, doesn't prioritize – there are many gifts of all different kinds – some can run a meeting, others sing with enthusiasm – some play one instrument – others a different one, some listen compassionately, others speak the truth in love, some organize events, others participate with joy. The key is to remember that all we are, all we do, all we can be is from God and not of our own creation and this is just as true of the person sitting next to you – just as true of people you know as those you do not yet know.

Not only that but whatever is in us to contribute comes from the Spirit for the good of the whole community of faith – spiritual gifts are not stars in our personal crown. Every gift is given for the common good and must be exercised in the church for the sake of the ministry to the whole community. As soon as they start to be treated as possessions for performative glory, private thrills or personal power, they become corrupt and begin to cause dissension. Gifts of the Spirit are not for show or power but for the building up of the church, for the common good.

When I taught school, dissension was an ordinary part of many days – kids are like that I suppose – some adults too – and an important skill for educators is to learn how to deal with discord and conflict. One of the most effective things I taught the children in my care was that they needed to measure their behaviour against a simple question: *“Is it helpful or hurtful?”* When you want to throw snowballs at one another, the question is not whether it’s fun – it is fun! The question is, is it helpful or hurtful? When you want to talk aloud in the classroom, the question is not whether you have something burning in you to add to the conversation – the question is does it help or hurt the learning of others? When you engage in an argument, the question is not whether you are right – perhaps you are, the question is, is it helpful to argue?

The same pattern can be employed in our context. When we complain about the time spent at meetings, the question is not whether we like meetings or not – we don’t have to like them. The question is, is it helpful or hurtful to complain or to enter the meeting with a negative attitude? The question is, is the work we are engaged in together helpful or hurtful? When we become frustrated because it seems the same people always do all the work, the question is not whether we are right to be frustrated and to feel overburdened – maybe we are, the question is, is it helpful to participate in the life of the church overcome by feelings of frustration or does it hurt our relationship with God and our relationships with others? When we complain and argue about decisions and hopes for the future, the question is less about which way is right – there probably is no right way – people have different ideas and dreams about the ongoing vitality of the church and there are various paths we can follow, trusting God’s steadfast guidance. The question is, is complaining and arguing helpful or hurtful – constructive or destructive – does it serve the common good?

Paul addresses the readers of his letters as brothers and sisters – *siblings*. They were communities divided, exploiting one another, some seeing themselves as more righteous – yet Paul calls them one body in Christ. It is a reminder that as we seek to live in Christian

community, we are bound to experience conflicting opinions, visions, and attitudes – it was normal in Paul’s time, and it is normal today.

When Paul exhorts the Roman church to resist being judgmental – to stop worrying about food and drink – he is telling them – telling us – to stop being petty and to focus on what matters: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. When Paul reminds those in Corinth to celebrate the varieties of gifts they have received from the divine Spirit he is encouraging them and us to simply be about the business of using our gifts wisely – for the common good.

This is what can seem so obvious and what some people just can’t seem to get, what some can’t accept, and what most of us find hard to live up to. The church is a community of widely differing ideas and gifts – from the same God – all rooted in our desire to be faithful disciples of Jesus. Everyone of us has gifts and ideas to share. All are given for the common good – for the enhancement of community life that happens when God’s Spirit liberates blessed humans for mutual learning and care.

Yet some of us just don’t get it! As congregations seeking to work together, we need to be open to differences, so we become potentially wealthy in the Spirit. When we fail to recognize this – when we don’t get it – when we see difference as a threat or discourage another person’s point of view, then we invite a sense of poverty. We make ourselves poor and weak and pathetic through conformity and narrowness of being.

We are a community with widely differing gifts and different ideas about what is the best way into our shared future. The helpful attitude is to understand this as a source of richness, embracing God’s gifts in ourselves and in one another. Our health as congregations – our hoped-for thriving – is better together – better as we lean upon and celebrate diversity that serves the common good – this is the basis of our abundant strength and vitality.

Please join me in prayer...

Gracious God, we unite in prayer gladly even as we acknowledge our diversity. Help us to embrace your many and varied gifts – to use them as you desire. Help us to appreciate the different gifts of others, remembering that your Holy Spirit comes to each one of us. Teach us to always seek the common good – *to pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding*. We pray thankfully and with confidence because your abundance blesses us through Christ Jesus, our Lord. **Amen**

Musical Reflection

Invitation to Offering

the Rev. Mitch Coggin

World Communion Sunday reminds us that we are part of a global family, committed to serve our neighbours in Jesus' name. The gifts we offer join the gifts of many others to bring the love and compassion of Christ into places of deep need. Let us bless others as we have been blessed in Christ.

3rd Hymn # 530 / *Come with Joy (congregation seated)*

Balm in Gilead

Doxology: # 79 Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Prayer of Dedication

the Rev. Mitch Coggin

Generous God, though many different amounts and ways, when brought to You, our gifts become a food pantry, a rebuilt life, medicine for children, a caregiver to the lonely - your grace in action. In love we offer these gifts in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Invitation to the Table

the Rev. Mitch Coggin

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. This is the Lord's table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving # 564

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Sanctus (sung by the choir)

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Prayers of the People and The Our Father #469 Balm in Gilead/Choral Scholars

Receiving of the Elements

the Rev. Laura Kavanagh

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes. These are the gifts of God, for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

(Deliver elements to elders)

Communion Music: (played and sung during communion – Balm in Gilead)

Prayer After Communion

the Rev. Mitch Coggin

Lord, You have nourished us, body and soul, in this meal. We have heard Your love proclaimed. Now send us out to speak it to others. We have seen Your love poured out, now send us out to show it in everything we do. We have been fed by Your love at Your table, now send us out to share it so the world may believe. Amen.

4th Hymn # 480 *In Christ There Is No East or West*

Charge and benediction

the Rev. Mitch Coggin

You are a blessed people. Go and be a blessing to the world. You are the face of Jesus. Go and reflect love and compassion to all. You are the family of God. Go and serve our sisters and brothers wherever we find them. Love mercy and peace, from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, will be with you now and always. **Amen**

Amen **#264 Sing Amen**

Postlude *Ode to Joy* by Hal Hobson