

Welcome/Announcements/Land Acknowledgement Martha Anderson (worship elder)

As followers of Jesus, we are compelled to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. It is our love of God and neighbour that leads us to acknowledge the land where we gather. We honour God with gratitude for this land and the peoples who have fished, hunted, harvested and gathered here for generations. This is the Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ. It is traditional and unceded land. We pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships.

➤ *There is room for all*

Call to Worship

Shout for joy to our Creator God, all the earth

Worship the Lord with gladness

Come before God with joyful songs

Enter God's gates with thanksgiving and the Holy courts with praise

Give thanks and praise God's holy name

For God is good and God's love endures forever

Let us worship together with confidence and hope

➤ *Stand up and bless the Lord*

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✠Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

God ever creating, ever loving, ever leading: your presence is peace when we are frantic – your Word is truth when we face deception – your Spirit offers freedom when we are paralyzed by fear. You give purpose in confusing times – you call for justice when the world settles for inequality. For all that you are, all that you have been, and all that you will be, we worship you as the source of life, the promise of redemption, and the spirit of love in action.

Merciful God, you call us to fullness of life, but we confess our shortcomings. We wander from your ways and waste your gifts; we ignore your grace at work among us, and too often focus on loss and complaint. We can be suspicious of the motives of others – too quick to judge and too slow to forgive. Give us the courage to see clearly who and what we are. With your forgiveness, cleanse us from all our faults and failings, and inspire us to walk a new way. **Amen**

God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is God's love – as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sins from us. Rejoice that God has forgiven you and opens a new future every day.

➤ *For mornings bright*

SJ113

✠ Prayer for Understanding **Mary Dimech**

God of light and life, we turn to your Word for guidance and inspiration week after week. Send your Holy Spirit to move in and among us as we listen to the Scriptures read and interpreted. Help us to hear your challenge and your promise, and to respond with our commitment to follow Jesus. Amen

Scripture **Isaiah 6:1-8** **[OT 635]**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: *"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."*

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: *"Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"*

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: *"Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out."*

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"*

And I said, *"Here am I; send me!"*

Psalms 138 **responsive/displayed**

I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth.

They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

For though the LORD is high, God regards the lowly; but perceives the haughty from far away.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.

O LORD, fulfill your purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Luke 5:1-11 [NT 62]

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, *"Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."*

Simon answered, *"Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."*

When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, *"Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"*

For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who are partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."*

When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

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

Message

The year the King Uzziah died – the year the pandemic started – the year my mom died – the year we were married – the year that Tristan was born – the year that Ian started school – the year that Trump was elected president – again! – the year that Canadians rallied to resist US tariffs and bullying. There is something about the way that the passage from Isaiah starts that really grabs my attention. It is part of how we mark time – by attaching time to an event of significance in our lives.

The year I went to Guatemala – more than twenty years ago – I attended a colloquium and listened to a theologian from Nicaragua talk about ministry in his home country. He said that there is a great deal of preaching happening and very little mission because the Church enjoys the power of preaching without the work of justice. He went on to say that in a context where injustice is the norm – where everything is going wrong – introducing what he called *the hope factor* is considered revolutionary. Those who put into effect *the hope factor*, are saying: **“Here am I, send me!”** They are putting into effect the gospel as Jesus proclaimed it.

Putting into effect the gospel as Jesus told it recognizes that suffering in the world is not God’s fault or God’s will. It is not because of the sin of those who suffer. Rather the gospel as Jesus told it recognizes the responsibility of all believers for those who suffer – especially calling upon the wealthy and secure. According to one participant at that conference, it is the role of the prophet – the preacher – the teacher – my role I suppose – to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. She said we must announce the good news even if it is dangerous and unpopular.

We announce the good news of Christ through service in the world both as individuals and as a community of faith. We announce the good news through worship and fellowship, teaching and pastoral care, mission and outreach. We announce and enliven *the hope factor* as we respond to the voice of God asking, **“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”**

It has been interesting in the past week to see *the hope factor* played out in the secular life of Canadians across our country. People from coast to coast to coast are waking up to the reality that the context in which we live is one in which injustice is the norm – where so many things are wrong that it seems impossible to effect any change in the system. Despite that, people are seeking ways to resist tyranny – to do their part – to make a difference, however small. It is, in its way, revolutionary. It certainly gives me hope. And yet I know that in the church we resist tyranny and injustice as a core value and not only when it comes close to home or threatens us personally.

In the church we continually wrestle with the question God poses: *“who will go for us?”* We struggle with what it is that we are called to do. God calls us to participate in God’s love for the world by continuing the work of Jesus – continuing the incarnation of God’s love in our contact with each other. It is not sufficient for us to believe and be fed by God’s love. We are called as believers to live the gospel and that means loving and caring for others as God loves and cares for us – going out from where we are to where the

needs are – meeting the needs we find and sharing the good news – putting into effect *the hope factor*.

Our mission involvement may mean personal interaction or interaction at arms length facilitated through national organizations such as *Presbyterian World Service and Development*, or local groups such as *Our Place*, *Artemis Place*, *Cool Aid* or *Mustard Seed*. Mission is the living out of the gospel witness through service in a broken and hurting world. Mission is practical, relational, physical and spiritual – how could we offer the gospel message to someone who is hungry and fail to offer food? – how could we offer food to the despairing and fail to tell them that they are the beloved of God?

The year I started seminary at Vancouver School of Theology, we were sent for the day to the Downtown East Side of Vancouver – ***I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”*** and I did not want to go. I anticipated a day of discomfort – eating a meal that was not of my own choosing that had been prepared by who know who, walking around most of the day with no place to call my own, having no specific task to accomplish, being a stranger and feeling awkward. Probably the way many people who live there day in and day out feel much of the time, except that I could leave at three thirty and return to the safety of my known reality.

I was, and still am, disappointed by my initial reaction to that experience in a mission field. Throughout the course of the day, I was overwhelmed by feelings of sadness, despair and frustration. I was also surprised by the genuineness of the people we met – their acceptance, their honesty. I had trouble believing that anything I did as an individual or anything that was done by a community of faith really made a difference on Hastings Street. I was frustrated and depressed by the one-hundred-year history of mission activity in the area by First United Church – are they making a difference? The answer is yes – not as much of a difference as I would like but some people are kept warm, some families are kept dry, some teenagers are kept off the streets, some people return to prayers and hymns, some families are introduced to *the hope factor*, some teenagers meet Jesus for the first time. Efforts to bring hope and healing to those marginalized in our world are a valuable part of the mission of the church and of our call as Christians even when we don't really want to. ***“Here am I Lord, send me.”***

Not every mission experience is as personal as my day in the sub-culture of Vancouver's Downtown East Side. At Knox we participate in God's love for the world in many ways. We try to stay connected with our neighbours at Artemis Place and vulnerable students at the University of Victoria through meals, conversation and warm welcome. We contribute as a congregation to Our Place and as individuals through large and small acts of awareness

and kindness. We speak up and we speak out against injustices like the executive orders that threaten trans, non-binary and gender fluid people in the United States. We do this as a denomination, as members of a faith community and as Canadian citizens.

In fact, I received a communication from the PCC Program Coordinator for Sexuality and Inclusion, Carragh Erhardt, while writing this message. They were reaching out to support and encourage – to share resources and to offer hope in the face of economic uncertainty and decisions targeting already marginalized populations, especially immigrants, migrant workers and transgender people. They closed their message with this excerpt from a PCUSA resource, extended to those who will be most impacted by the political decisions made in the next four years:

Hateful people want nothing more than to see you feeling hopeless and abandoned – but we promise you, there will always be people in your corner ready to protect you with our lives. We will not leave you to fight alone, no matter how dire things get. Cling to your community, nurture your spirit however you can, and remember: Politicians were never going to save us. We keep us safe, trusting in the love and solidarity of the One who created each of us with purpose and delight (Genesis 1:31; Psalm 139:14).

Jesus calls us to bring hope and healing to a broken world and that is the message of the gospel that we share within and beyond our community of faith. As we reach out in service, we participate in God's love for the world. We need to remember that God's love is without limit – God's love encourages each of us to use the gifts with which we have been blessed – God's love works through us and sometimes in spite of us.

Several years ago in Edmonton, the church we were members of asked for people to provide a meal and worship service at a local downtown mission. ***We heard the voice of the Lord asking, "Who will go for us?"*** and we said, ***"Send us."*** We went as servers and helpers during the lunch as well as singers and readers for the service of worship. We wondered what to do about our children for the afternoon. Some in the group had older children who could participate but Tristan and Ian were only five and six at the time so Steve and I felt that we would be of greater service if we left the boys at home with a babysitter. They knew that other kids were going to a different church with us and wanted to know what was going on.

Their curiosity seemed a good opportunity to talk about mission work – to begin the process of mission awareness – so one day in the car we talked about preparing a meal for people who didn't have much food and taking it to them. We talked about taking our church service to them – about singing and praying with them. The boys wondered why we didn't just give the ingredients for the meal to those in need, why we didn't just send them our songs. I talked about how some people don't have the tools to prepare their

own meals or the enthusiasm to sing their own songs. Sometimes they don't have the physical tools, sometimes they don't have the knowledge tools, sometimes they don't have the emotional or the spiritual tools.

Well, our boys persisted (it is in their nature) – why not provide them with the tools so that we didn't have to keep on making meals and leading worship for them? And I tried to explain that some of the people we would be feeding didn't even have homes in which to prepare or eat the meal. This shocked our children and for a moment there was a welcome silence in the car. Then they burst out, "Then we should invite them to our house, and they could live with us while we build them a house." It seemed simple and straight forward to them that we should address the need at its source, that we should not limit our participation in God's love to the practical and convenient but would reach out with the passion of eager children to feed and heal our broken world.

"Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" A question and a challenge for each of us. Isaiah responded immediately and positively by saying, ***"Here am I, send me!"*** True, he had six winged seraphs and holy choirs and hot coals to blot out sin and give him courage – but we have the life, death and resurrection of Jesus to inspire and sustain us. We have the gospel and the Holy Spirit. We have *the hope factor*. ***"Here I am, send me."***

➤ ***I, the Lord of sea and sky***

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✠ Offering and Prayer

Let us bring our first fruits to God, to serve others and to share with a world in need.

➤ ***Praise God from whom all blessings flow***

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Blessed are you, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for the building of your kingdom and to your glory. Amen

✠ Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

O Good and Holy God, we come here this day, after a week filled with so many things. We were blessed ways we never expected. We stumbled over old sins. At times, we felt good about our work. At other times, we were not so sure we did well. There were times when we were caught up in the routine of life, and times we were caught by its wonder.

For some of us, O God, there is joy in the celebration of life just as it is. For others there is only hope for a better tomorrow. There are times when we feel we are walking step by step with you. But there are also times when we go our own way without thinking about you or your will.

Holy One, we come to you, just as we are, full of life as we live it and filled with the needs that these days have created in us. We bring these needs to your gracious care, to have them healed, restored and redeemed by your presence and power.

We also come to you because you care about this world in which we live. Sometimes it seems like such a beautiful world, sometimes it seems a tragic place filled with pain, suffering and injustice. In faith, humility and hope, help us to love the world as you love it. Deepen our calling to serve the world and its needs.

God of peace, we ask that you would use the leaders of all nations to help bring peace. Grant that we might help to bring justice to all the earth. Remind and encourage us to live in your light, knowing that you hear our prayers as we pray together **...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, for ever. Amen**

➤ *Go make a difference*

More Voices 209

Blessing

Here our weary hands have been strengthened –

our knees made firm – our fears and anxieties removed.

We are sent to defend the cause of the weak –

to maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed –

to feed the hungry and set the prisoner free.

We are sent to share the Good News of new life in Jesus Christ.

May the Living Christ go with us...

behind us to encourage, beside us to befriend,

above us to watch over, within us to give strength,

and ahead of us to show the way. **Amen**

➤ *Go now in peace*