

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement [April Watt](#)

**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 that we gather with gratitude on traditional and unceded Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people. We pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves again to just and respectful relationships.**

➤ *Come, Holy Spirit (Gaither)*

Call to Worship (from *The Institutes* – Jean Calvin)

*We are not our own; therefore, neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and actions.*

***We are not our own; therefore, let us not propose it as our end, to seek what may be expedient for us according to the flesh.***

*We are not our own; therefore, let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and all things that are ours.*

***On the contrary, we are God's; to God therefore let us live and die.***

*We are God's; therefore, let divine wisdom and will preside in all our actions.*

***We are God's; towards God therefore as our only legitimate end, let every part of our lives be directed...***

➤ *Arise, your light is come*

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† Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

Holy One, let our souls rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun. We are very busy – doing many things in your name O God – active in the life of the church – seeking to make a difference in our neighbourhoods and in our world. We take a moment now to be still – to remember that you are God – to call to you – confident that you will not only hear but will increase our strength of soul.

Knowing that you are a compassionate God, we offer both the good and the bad news of our lives to you. We set it all down – giving thanks, yearning for forgiveness, pledging repentance, cherishing your continued presence in the exciting and the routine, the significant and the trivial.

We come together today sharing a love for you in Jesus Christ – sharing a desire to glorify you in all we say and do. We confess that even as we try, we often fail to follow Jesus' example and lead the abundant, grace-filled lives you would have us live. Help us to turn back to you. Remind us that we are loved and forgiven. As we worship, work and play, help us to keep our focus on you, to feel your presence and to be guided by your Holy Spirit.

Lord of encouragement, give us the grace to do well those things which you have called us in Christ's name to do – to do carefully that which is difficult or complex – to patiently persevere with tasks that seem daunting – to respectfully submit to that which may go against the grain. Give us wisdom as we discern difficult things, faith strong enough to trust and follow the urging of your divine spirit, hope in your promises and love in all things. Amen

In the parable of the prodigal, Jesus tells of someone returning home in shame. Seeing the rebellious child in the distance, the parent runs out in welcome. So it is with us. When we feel lost, like a motherless child, we turn, and in that turning we see God coming toward us welcoming, forgiving and reassuring us. Thanks be to God!

➤ *When we are living*

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† Prayer for Understanding **Fiona Gow**

**God of wisdom, as we listen to scripture read and interpreted, fill our hearts and minds with your living Word, so that our faith will grow as we seek to follow Jesus. Amen**

Scripture

**Isaiah 58:1-12** [OT 688]

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?"

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

### **Psalm 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 4:14-22a** [NT 61]

Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

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

### Message

So – this is daunting – preparing the final message for the congregation I have loved and served for nearly 22 years. Am I supposed to cut loose and say all the things I wish I’d said over the years? You probably know that I have rarely held back much! Would it be better to go out with a whimper or a bang – is there a “right” way to end? And since endings can also be beginnings... who knows?!

With that in mind, I ignored the lectionary and I decided I would choose some of my best-loved scripture passages and tell you why they are meaningful to me. I hope and pray that they resonate with you and that they will continue to guide me to *infinity and beyond*... I mean, into retirement and whatever the next part of the journey holds!

**First – Isaiah 58:11** *The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.*

The reading from Isaiah is all about covenant. In the first part of the chapter the prophet outlines the understanding the people have of their agreement with God. They promised to worship God and God promised to look after them. The people say that they have kept their end of the bargain but that God is not listening – is not fulfilling the deal. Isaiah is telling them that they have it all wrong – that they don’t understand God’s expectations at all.

The people follow their rituals and seek God, their prayers seem to fall, unanswered to the ground and their acts of obedience have a hollow ring. The people do not live out of the relationship with God that their spiritual practice makes available to them – they do not live in the presence of God for all their posturing and posing. Is not this the fast that I choose: look after the poor, the hungry, the disadvantaged. The worship the people must live into is a worship of relationship – a worship of reaching out into the world.

The prophet tells us that the fast God chooses – the ritual God desires – is spiritual practice that lands our life in participation with God's hope for the world. When our spiritual life is about how we seek to bring God's justice in the world – when we live in harmony with God's plan – our light will break forth and our healing will spring up – the abundant life that we have received will be lived and shared in the world.

The people called and could not understand why God did not respond. Here we see Isaiah explaining that the communion with God that the people seek is linked to neighbourly attentiveness.

The fast that God chooses – demands – is for the people to live hospitably in the world – reaching out in kindness, sharing the gifts with which they have been blessed. Struggling for justice in large and small ways, emptying themselves of oppressive habits, touching and healing the hurt of those they encounter.

When the people understand and live the fast that God chooses, their lives will be changed forever. God's light will shine through their hearts and God's healing grace will pour from their hands.

Isaiah proclaims that if the people live the fast that God chooses, then they will never feel separated from God. They will never feel unanswered – they will never feel alone. This is the covenant – the promise that binds the people to their God.

When I came to Knox I made promises to the congregation and the Knox congregation made promises to me. We vowed to serve and support – to nurture and guide – to care and console, chide and cheer. We made promises – a solemn agreement that we have kept by God's grace for longer than any of us envisioned. This has been a blessing for me – one that I will cherish always.

We are sometimes parched – sometimes weak – sometimes struggling to survive, yet we are never alone in that journey. The fast that we choose – the fast that God demands – the fast of right relationship in the world – satisfies completely, bears us up and nourishes us with all the profusion of life. When we embrace God's call upon our lives – as minister

and congregation – we allow ourselves to be guided by the divine and thus become the oasis – the watered garden – that can truly make a difference in the world.

That is why I love this passage – because I want to be that spring of water – a rebuild and restorer in places of brokenness – however faltering, even for brief moments – and I want to encourage you to be that too. We can get distracted and misled by things in our world and in the church and forget our basic mission – to participate in and show forth God’s loving purpose in the world. At times I think we have all succeeded which fills me with gratitude and joy.

**Second – Psalm 138:3** *On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.*

Who doesn’t need their soul strengthened from time to time? These words echo the message from Isaiah (I really love this stuff!): *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.*

There have been occasions over these 20-plus years when we, as a congregation, have cried for help – when we have felt a bit desperate about the circumstances in which we have found ourselves. Remember the Christmas morning when there was no heat in the sanctuary and I climbed a ladder in the lounge? Remember the winter when the roof began to leak or the year we faced the overwhelming cost of replacing our heating system? Remember when we tried to offer soup to people on the street and no one came in or when we were asked to support the Bike for Bibles team and we had no idea if we could? But we did it! I remember these instances and so many more when we called on God and God said, *“Here I am”*. God said, *“Don’t panic”* and we didn’t. We called and God answered, increasing our strength of soul. It is my honest conviction that we can continue to do so – me in my retirement and you as a congregation entering a time of change, regrouping and ultimately, opportunity.

**Third – Luke 4:21** *Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”* Or, as it is rendered in the Living Bible I have from my teens: *“These Scriptures came true today!”*

These words are from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry but in it we also hear echoes – foreshadowing – of the end of Jesus’ ministry in chapter 23 when he reassures the criminal on the cross saying, *“Today you will be with me in Paradise.”* These passages are like bookends to his ministry. In both cases the present moment – today – seems important.

Try to live in the now – don't agonize with regret or paralyse yourself with worry – be present in your relationship with our living God today. The other thing that rings true for me in these gospel texts is the focus on the salvation – care for – importance of – attentiveness and connectivity to the other. In Luke 23 we hear one criminal focusing on his salvation and on the ability of Jesus to save himself and those hanging beside him. Instead, Jesus remembers the whole of God's creation – knowing that none can be saved while some are forgotten. When he reads from the Isaiah scroll, Jesus reminds those gathered in the synagogue that their road to salvation – to right relationship with God – lies in their compassion for others – the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable in their society.

According to Yann Martel in his popular novel, *Life of Pi*, *Christianity is a religion in a rush. Look at the world created in seven days. Even on a symbolic level, that's creation in a frenzy. To one born in a religion where the battle for a single soul can be a relay race run over many centuries, with innumerable generations passing along the baton, the quick resolution of Christianity has a dizzying effect. If Hinduism flows placidly like the Ganges, then Christianity bustles like Toronto at rush hour. It is a religion as swift as a swallow, as urgent as an ambulance. It turns on a dime, expresses itself in the instant. In a moment you are lost or saved. Christianity stretches back through the ages, but in essence it exists only at one time: right now.*"

That rings so true for me – the "right nowness" of things secular and sacred. Maybe God's dream and desire is real and it is real right now. Maybe the realm and reality of God is present wherever people pray as Jesus taught – wherever people aspire to a way of life that bears the fruit of the Spirit. Maybe the reign of Christ is wherever people pour water as a sign of new birth or take bread and wine to their lips because Jesus said it was a way to remember him and to be in relationship with the divine.

What would you say if you were asked to name the most important day? Would you think about your personal life or that of your family? Would it be a significant day in the church year or a national event? Would you think of a time in the past or the future? Would it be a special occasion – like the last day with a group of people you have loved and cared for and sought to serve as God desires? Would it be today?

Today – like everyday – we can make a difference as we participate in God's dream of abundance and flourishing for all. Today is both an end and a beginning – one season ends as another begins...

Steve said I should end by quoting Douglas Adams (*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*): *So long, and thanks for all the fish.*

† Offering Invitation

God responds to our needs and requests with great generosity. Such is God's great love. Let us share that love with others through the offerings we present.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

† Offering Prayer

**Generous God, we offer our gifts, thankful that your love is overflowing. Bless them and us so that your love will flow into the world to meet the needs of those who cry out to you and to us. Amen**

An Affirmation of Faith (enfleshed – m jade kaiser)

**As a gathered community of disciples,  
created by the hands of the Holy,  
born with Divine purpose,  
and bound together by the Spirit  
that breathes life into all things,**

**we affirm our commitment to the way of Jesus Christ,  
who is The Liberator of the Oppressed,  
The Bread of Heaven, God enfleshed.**

**With faith, we aim to live as Christ taught us,  
laboring towards liberation,  
and seeking a world free of domination and control.**

**We believe in God's promise to uplift the lowly  
and bring the powerful down from their thrones.**

**We believe the resurrecting power of Christ  
cannot be overcome by evil,  
but persists in all collective efforts  
to make life flourish in the midst of destruction,  
to birth beauty in places of death,  
and to tend gently to the aches of this world.**

**We profess the transforming power of love.  
We profess that justice is a form of love.  
We profess that we are still growing into the mystery of love.**

**In the company of the saints who go before us,  
we journey together by grace,  
seeking always to unlearn all that obstructs authentic relationship,  
listening for the guidance of Sacred Wisdom,  
And praying earnestly for the day  
the Kindom of God is born anew.**

**Until it is so, we live in hope, for God is with us.**

### 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 – you are all welcome. Christ invites us to meet him here.

➤ *Put peace into each other's hands*

*560*

### Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Holy One is 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 our thanks and praise...**

God our Creator, your Spirit swept over the face of the waters like a mighty wind, and the world was born, full of mystery and wonder. You breathed on the dust and humankind sprang to life, made in your image to share in community with you and one another. By your Spirit, you gave us breath and speech to sing your praise with all living things. So now, with all your creatures great and small, with your saints before us, beside us and beyond us, we lift our voices to echo the song of creation...

*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!*

God our Companion, in Jesus Christ, we have seen your loving face smiling at those on the edge of the crowd, weeping with friends in the depths of despair, inviting little children to draw near, offering new possibilities for each precious soul. In this bread and this cup, you hold out new possibilities for each of us, precious as we are.

Send down your Holy Spirit with power and grace upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine. With the flame of your Spirit, let us taste the passion of Jesus Christ, baked into this bread, and be moved to act with compassion in his name. With the wind of your Spirit, let us taste the renewing love of Jesus Christ that refreshes us from this cup, and be moved to greet each day with fresh hope.

As we eat and drink together today, make us one with Christ and one with each other, so that our unity and our diversity at this table may be signs of your promise that all things will be reconciled to each other through your love. 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!*

### The Story of the Table

Whenever we gather at this table, we hear the story of how God's love set this table for us, to heal our past and set us free for the future. On the night he was betrayed by friends, Jesus came to the table with those very friends. He took bread and blessed it. He broke the bread and said: *"Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me."*

When the meal was ended, he took a cup and passed it among his friends saying: *"This is the cup of the new covenant, sealed in my blood for the forgiveness of sin. Drink this all of you."*

**Now we do as Jesus did, taking the bread and the cup. In these gifts, Jesus promises to be present. Through these Christ makes us whole and so we sing...**

*Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!  
Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and 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 or 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, now revives 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.*

➤ *O, let the power fall on me*

## † Prayer after Communion

We have come to the table with nothing but our faith, yet we leave filled with visions of heaven and offerings of thanksgiving for the world. As we leave, filled in spirit, may our hearts pour out over the world. As we have shared a meal, may we share whatever we have with others. As we have been filled with you, O Holy Spirit, continue to pour through us as we serve the world in simple ways: May we weep, with those who weep. May we laugh with those who laugh. May we listen to those who do not feel heard. May we speak encouragement to those who need a blessing. May we share an embrace with the one who needs connection. Take our lives, O God, and share us with your world, that we may be Living Sacrifices and a royal priesthood, offering acts of devotion, sacrifice and thanksgiving with the world. Holy One, as we rise from the table, you go before us. Give us ears to hear and eyes to see where you will lead. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray together singing...

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

## Blessing

Get ready to go well. On the good days give thanks to God – in your bad days, give thanks to God. Neither think too highly of your achievements nor put yourself down as useless. You are a child of God, sufficiently beautiful and sufficiently flawed to receive the costly grace of the crucified Lord.

Go your way with a resilient and cheerful spirit. And may the grace of the Risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Spirit embrace us all.

➤ *Go now in peace 622*