

Worship on September 26, 2021

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – Lord Prepare Me
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31
- Sermon: Sharing Our Gifts
- The Prayer for the people of God

We Respond

- Offering – Jesus We Enthroned You

We Serve

- Benediction

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us live right now. This is Sunday, September 26th, 2021. It is Presbyterian Sharing Sunday. Heather Chappel, Education Program Coordinator of Stewardship & Planned Giving will share the message today. It is going to be a good opportunity for us to widen our eyes and learn what kinds of good works are done through our gifts.

. Next week, come to church. We will resume in-person worship in more than 1 and half years. Before coming, make sure that you are double vaccinated and wear masks. We have In-person contact trace form. If you can fill in before coming to church, it is great. If you cannot, we will have the form at the entrance.

. Bible study will be continued after settling down in-person worship.

. Worship volunteers are always welcome. We need scripture readers and ushers.

. Thank you for your support with your gifts. God may use our gifts and us for this world and our community.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Responsive Call to Worship

One: With wisdom and generosity, **All: God created us.**

One: With grace and compassion, **ALL: Jesus embraces us.**

One: With ideas and inspiration, **All: The Holy Spirit transforms us.**

One: Together, let us worship God. **All: Praise the Lord**

Praise song – Lord Prepare Me

Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary
Pure and holy, tried and true;
With thanksgiving, I will be a living sanctuary for you.

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

God of heaven and earth, your splendor is infinite, your power incomparable, your holiness beyond our understanding. In your wisdom, you shaped the earth in wonder and mystery, and you made all things and called them good. You have given us life and blessed us with gifts and talents to share. And you have called us into community with one another where we come together to reflect your love and grace. And so, with our lips, we sing your praises, and with our lives we offer you our worship, this day and always.

In recalling all that you are, we remember who we are, and we confess to you our sins:

Loving and merciful God, full of compassion, slow to anger and quick to lavish mercy. You promise forgiveness and new life, but we confess that we love our old ways. You call us into one body, but we confess that, too often, we fail to work together. We are slow to see Christ in our neighbour, and we nourish hurts and are divided by anger. By the power of your Spirit, fill us with vibrant new life, ready to bear the fruit of goodness and love.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, Anyone who is a new creation in Christ. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Together we have confessed our sins to Jesus Christ. Know that we are forgiven and be at peace.

Prayer for Illumination:

By your Spirit, O God, give us wisdom and understanding, so that our minds may be opened, our hearts taught to love, and our wills strengthened to work for your mission. Amen.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: Sharing Our Gifts

Honeybees play an essential role in our world. They pollinate crops and trees, which in turn provide us with food to eat and air to breathe. They are social insects, living in community, thousands in one hive. Each has a task to perform in order to keep the hive functioning well. The head of the colony is the queen, who lays about 200,000 eggs each year. The drones fertilize those eggs. And then there are worker bees, who have many jobs. Some feed the brood, others build and repair the honeycomb. There are bees who clean, guard and defend the hive, gather pollen and nectar and produce honey and wax.

When it's hot outside, bees fan their wings to keep the hive cool. When it gets cold, they vibrate to keep one another warm. And when a worker bee discovers nectar? It dances to share the good news of the discovery with the other workers!

Bees depend on one another for survival—one bee cannot survive without its colony. By working together, each bee uses its skills to serve and keep the community healthy and strong.

Like bees in a hive, each one of us is an integral part of God's family.

Today's epistle reading comes from a letter Paul wrote to the congregation in Corinth, a few years after the resurrection of Jesus. He knew the congregation was experiencing challenges. People were preaching the gospel. Some were experiencing holy visions, others were healers, teachers, miracle workers. However, there was conflict. They began to judge each other, each believing that their own gifts were more important and more valuable to Christ's church. So, Paul used the body as an illustration for the church. He reminded them that the body doesn't function if every part is the same, it functions because each one is different. Each part has its own unique role to play. So it is with the church: a body with many members, every member essential, all part of God's family. Paul reminded the congregation that all gifts and abilities come from God and should be used to further God's kingdom.

Of course, it's not always easy to work together or to have the confidence to share our gifts. We just have to look at Moses and Aaron to see that there is lots of room for imperfection. But we also learn from their story that God can use our gifts, imperfections and all.

When God called Moses from the burning bush to lead the Israelites, Moses protested that he couldn't speak well and felt inadequate for the job. So, God gave him Aaron, an excellent orator, as a partner, and assured Moses that he would help them both to speak.

We can learn much from Moses' and Aaron's partnership.

In order to lead God's people, both Moses and Aaron had to be willing to work together for God's mission. As Moses' older brother, Aaron had to humble himself to accept God's choice, and Moses had to accept the help. And, as promised, God worked through them both. Together they faced the Pharaoh and led the Israelites not only out of captivity but through four decades in the desert. Neither Moses nor Aaron was perfect, both made mistakes along the way, but God was able to work through them, imperfections and all, as they led God's people to the promised land.

We are called into a church community so that we might both receive God's blessings and share God's blessings with others. As a church, we have been given a variety of gifts and each of us can play a valuable role. You might work with children and youth, preach, or lead worship. Maybe you make the coffee or clean up after an event. You might minister through music, welcome people at the door or offer listening ears in quiet times. You might excel at fundraising, or prepare minutes, agendas and newsletters. You might spend hours praying for ministries or writing encouraging notes. There are many gifts and abilities. While some gifts are more visible and attention-getting, the quieter, behind-the-scenes gifts are just as important. It won't always be easy, but with God's help, we can nurture and grow our gifts. We may play different roles,

using different gifts at different times, but without ALL of the gifts that are offered, our churches cannot do what we are called to do: to care for one another, and to share God's transforming love in the world.

Today, we celebrate people from all walks of life who are using their gifts to participate in God's mission through their gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. As our church's mission and ministry fund, Presbyterians Sharing is one of the ways that Presbyterians across Canada work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love and hope in our communities, in Canada and around the world.

Because of our gifts:

- New congregations are planted and others experience growth and renewal
 - Ministries with Indigenous people in Canada are serving people scarred by Residential Schools, racism, discrimination and the loss of culture and language.
 - Theological students in Canada, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana and Beirut prepare to shine Christ's light in their communities.
 - Indigenous teams translate the Bible into their own languages in Taiwan.
 - Young people attend and are inspired by Canada Youth events.
 - Sex workers are treated with kindness and dignity through ARISE Ministry in Toronto.
 - Refugees find friendship and support through Action Réfugiés Montréal.
- ...and so much more!

Working together isn't always easy, but as we share in ministry across Canada and around the world, God is working through all of us. Here are some stories of people and congregations who are sharing God's love and hope as they participate in God's mission with us.

Hope for Vulnerable People

Kate McGee is Executive Director and Chaplain of Boarding Homes Ministry, which provides comfort and companionship to people living in low-rent housing in the core of Toronto. Many live with a crushing combination of mental illness, addiction and poverty. Kate and the staff and volunteers are working to reduce the social isolation of people living with mental illness.

Kate shared this story:

A few years ago, I met George, wild-haired and wild-eyed, at the door of his Parkdale boarding house. It was a typical Parkdale moment: I was arriving for a pastoral visit just as firefighters were on their way out. It had been a false alarm. We proceeded to the startling turquoise and yellow sitting room where George trained a skeptical eye on me and said, "What are you? Some kind of worker?"

"I'm a chaplain," I offered, prepared to explain.

Unexpectedly, George lit right up, "A chaplain? I LOVE chaplains! We had those in prison!"

And so, a great friendship was born. Over the better part of a year, we got to know George at our weekly visits. He was devastatingly funny, tossing a deadpan comment into a conversation that would make the whole room crack up. He had limitless enthusiasm and childlike glee. He loved to read the Bible with our team member, Jim, and listen to him play the banjo. As George came to trust us, we learned how hard his past was and how deeply he'd been hurt by people who were, in his words, "NOT kind and gentle." It is a miracle that George stayed so tender-hearted despite the cruelty he had faced.

Over the summer, George looked increasingly unwell and distraught. Before we knew it, he was back in prison. It took us months to find him, but he was so delighted when we showed up on the

prison's video screen one day. He asked us about the banjo and proudly told us about his Bible class.

One of the most insidious things about mental illness is how it cuts people off from one of the greatest gifts of human existence: the capacity to be in relationship. A person experiencing mental illness can feel like a barrier has descended around them until they can no longer feel the love of friends and family. Ironically, this happens when people need the love of friends and family the most.

If we want to be the friend or neighbour who doesn't shun the suffering person, if we want to love despite futility and fear, we have to look the darkness right in the face. We can't be looking for a quick fix.

Working in this ministry is a lesson in finding small joys amid great pain. Sometimes problems are too big for a quick fix. The forces at work are too great, and systemic change takes time. Our little ministry is unlikely to end poverty or cure schizophrenia. But loneliness and isolation make both of those afflictions so much worse. And we can fight those by choosing to connect in the moment we're given. We can feel the Spirit right there with us, delighting in us as we delight in each other.

Through Presbyterians Sharing, we share hope with vulnerable people.

Hope through Congregations

Cariboo Presbyterian Church in British Columbia and Two Rivers Church in Guelph, Ontario, are two congregations reaching out with the love of Christ to meet the needs of people in their own communities.

Cariboo Presbyterian Church has a house church ministry in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region of northern British Columbia—a breathtaking wilderness of grass-filled valleys and rocky ridges, scattered with forests and deep blue lakes. The small communities are accessible only by driving countless hours through winding back roads. The house church ministry connects people living in these communities, allowing them to worship and serve God together.

Halfway across the country is Two Rivers Church, a house church ministry in Guelph, Ontario. Guelph is rich in music, arts and culture and there are many places of worship, including four traditional Presbyterian churches. At Two Rivers Church, people who are not comfortable in these traditional settings gather in living rooms where they share meals and conversations that draw them deeper into friendship and spiritual growth.

Both of these ministries, meeting in very different settings for different reasons, share a common mission of serving their neighbours through small acts of service and hospitality: baking a pie, shoveling snow, driving someone to the doctor, or doing yard work for an elderly neighbour. The vision is simple but the impact is great. When we pay attention to the people around us and seek to understand their needs, we can form relationships and offer hospitality through simple acts of kindness.

Through Presbyterians Sharing, we participate in God's mission by helping start new faith communities across Canada. This allows ministers and lay leaders to try new things to bring people together, in and through Christ, and it helps our church grow and flourish.

Hope for Prisoners in Malawi

We participate in God's mission with international partners, who share God's love and hope in their communities. We send grants and mission staff to encourage, equip and accompany these partners. Even when mission staff had to return home in 2020 due to COVID-19, they continued to support our partners from Canada.

One of the programs, supported by the Rev. Joel Sherbino in his role as the PCC's mission liaison to Malawi, is Blantyre Synod's prison ministry in Malawi. In this ministry, visits from "Friends of Prison" volunteers, Rammy, Lyca and Hastings, offer hope. Pre-COVID, these dedicated volunteers were regularly visiting 13 prisons, often travelling hours by foot, motorbike, bike, taxi or on crowded minibuses to stay connected and encourage the prisoners. From 2019–2020, when COVID-19 forced them to return home, Steve McInnis and Nora Martin were part of the prison ministry team, teaching English, chemistry and math at Chichiri Prison's reformatory school, which offers both primary and secondary classes to the inmates.

Norah shared this story:

Samuel is an elderly man, perhaps seventy years old. He is an inmate in Chichiri Prison, and a grade 9 student of English, math and chemistry. We don't know what Samuel's offense was, but it could have been something as minor as stealing a bicycle or a \$25 cell phone—both crimes that can result in two years in prison.

During our classes, Samuel typically sat at the back of the classroom, listening attentively, taking notes and doing the exercises we assigned him. He seldom said anything, but it was clear that he was engaged. One day at the end of a math class he said in tones of wonder, "I have never seen that before!" Another time, after struggling with several examples in English class, he said, with great satisfaction, "I get it now!"

His delight in learning something new was one of the reasons we found teaching at Chichiri prison so rewarding.

The prison's school is a ray of hope. Our classes were pretty informal and attendance was spotty, but we were told that the students enjoyed them, and that they were happy we had come all the way from Canada to teach.

Volunteers Rammy, Lyca and Hastings continue to share God's hope and love in Blantyre Synod's prisons, even with the new challenges that COVID brought this past year. Prisons were closed to the public, so family and friends could not visit their loved ones or take food and supplies and public transport was no longer safe for the volunteers to travel. However, with the generosity of Canadian Presbyterians, upgrades and repairs were made to an old, retired vehicle they have affectionately named "Vintage," so that could still make the monthly drops of food, soap and medicine. And, unable to fully deliver Bible studies in the prisons, Hastings began writing Bible studies to be shared with the inmates so that they could lead them on their own. Joel says, "That is Hastings to a T—never discouraged and always coming up with new ways to reach people for Jesus."

Through Presbyterians Sharing, we share the good news around the world, in word and action.

We are disciples of Christ, empowered by the Spirit, glorifying God and rejoicing in service. We are members of a body bigger than our individual congregations, and together we are involved in God's mission and ministry in ways that are bigger than our individual efforts. Together, we are the Presbyterian Church in Canada, a vibrant denomination, putting our faith into action.

We can use our unique gifts—of time, talent and treasure—big and small, to make a difference in the world God loves. We may not all have the gift of chaplaincy, or the ability to teach in a prison in Malawi, or the knowledge to translate the Bible. But when we give to Presbyterians Sharing, our financial gifts, our prayers and our encouraging words empower others to use their gifts to share God's love on our behalf, in Canada and around the world. We can learn about the ministries we support and be inspired to live out God's mission in our communities. We can

reach out to people who are socially isolated. We can share the gospel in new ways. We can extend the gift of hospitality, and care for marginalized people.

This is what Presbyterians Sharing is all about.

Each of us has received gifts from God.
So dance like the honeybee! Share the good news!
And know this—when we put our gifts into God's hands,
God does remarkable things.

Let us pray.

God of everything, we thank you so much for today's lesson. We learned that we can join making changes in the world by supporting your works. We could give money, we could pray for them, we could tell others about the needs. It is invitation in your powerful works. Thank you for giving us opportunities to work with you. It is amazing that you care for us so much. As we remember and celebrate the works we do as a local church and national church, fill our hearts with hope and courage, and willingness to join your works. Use us Lord. We are yours. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers For The People Of God

God of loving kindness, we bring you our prayers for your church and for your world, that they may be transformed and filled with your love.

We pray for your church in this neighbourhood and around the world.
Guard and nurture it in the ways of unity and service for your people.
Wherever and whenever your church is divided, make it whole;
where it is torn by conflict and misunderstanding, repair it;
and where it is tempted by forms of dishonesty or idolatry,
reform our worship and restore our devotion.

Especially, we pray now for the cares and concerns of this congregation.
Next week, we are going to invite all into our church building for in-person worship. We missed it so much and we are still cautious because of the corona virus. But, together, we will overcome it. And together, we will enjoy your presence upon us and your power in our lives. Strengthen us through our worship and fill us with your love and care.

We also pray for our community beyond our congregation.
We thank you first of all for the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. They were imprison in China they came back home finally after three long years. Restore their lives and fill their hearts with encouragement and peace and joy.

Compassionate God, we ask for mercy and healing for people who struggle. Help us to be vessels of your love, sharing faith and hope.

We thank you for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and for the many congregations that are part of it. May we work together through word and action, using our gifts to share the love of God that we know in Jesus Christ.

We pray for the mission and ministries we support through Presbyterians Sharing.

We pray for international mission staff and partners who are working to share the good news of God's love and justice around the world.

We pray for national staff, committees and volunteers who work hard to support congregations, presbyteries and synods in these changing and challenging times.

We remember ministries with Indigenous people and pray for their leaders and members. We pray that healing and reconciliation work will help build good relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

We pray for ministries working with marginalized people in Canada, that they will provide healing and hope.

We pray for the students, faculty and staff at our theological colleges: Knox College, Presbyterian College and St. Andrew's Hall and Vancouver School of Theology.

We pray for the ministry of all congregations, that you grant us energy, wisdom and compassion as we seek to follow you. Bless us as we work on matters of justice and speak out for the voiceless. Bless us as we witness to your love in our communities, start new communities of faith across Canada and share your hope with the world.

O God, for the joy of participating in the transforming work of Jesus Christ and for the ability to share in building a future with hope, we give you thanks. We offer these prayers in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering.

We are all God's people; created with different skills and talents. Let us join our hands to others' hands, and give our tithes and offerings to God. Let us pray for our offering.

Offering prayer:

O God, Giver of all good things, Because of your goodness, we have these gifts to share. Thank you for granting us the opportunity to share your love with our support for this congregation, with our gifts to Presbyterians Sharing with our daily activities and encounters with others. Thank you for our unity in Christ with your people in this congregation and around the world. By our giving and by our living, may your grace touch all peoples and renew the whole creation through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Praise song – Jesus We Enthroned You

A F#m
Jesus, we enthrone You
D E
We proclaim You are King
F#m C#m
Standing here, in the midst of us
Dmaj7 E
We raise You up with our praise

D C#m F#m
And as we worship, build Your throne
D E A F#m
And as we worship, build Your throne
D E A F#m
And as we worship, build Your throne
D E A
Come Lord Jesus, and take Your place

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Jesus is King. Jesus gave us all. Jesus is Lord. Who is driving our lives? We pray to God, Jesus sit on the throne of our lives and we step down from being the lord of our lives.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.