

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Guest Worship Leader: Rev. Beryl Orok

God Calling  
Proper 10  
Ezekiel 37:1-14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Let us worship God, our light, and our salvation.

**The Lord is the stronghold of our lives.**

We desire to live in God's house  
**and to seek God in his holy temple.**

We have come with shouts of joy,  
**to sing and to make music to the Lord.**

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.  
**Teach us your ways and make straight our paths  
in this hour of worship and always.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Loving God, we have gathered to meet you.

We have come to listen to you,  
to seek you, to worship you.

You are the beginning of all things,  
the life of all things; you knew us before we were born.

All knowing Father, you are here and everywhere,  
around us and within us; you know our inmost thoughts.

In you we hope; in you we live.

You are the source of serenity,  
giving peace that is beyond our understanding.

We pray for your presence in our worship and in our lives

In the name of your Son, Our Lord,  
Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

**Children's Hymn: "Fruit of the Spirit"****Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
Let us make our confession to God.

**Prayer of Confession**

Holy and merciful God,  
in your presence we confess  
our sinfulness, our shortcomings,  
and our offenses against you.  
You alone know how often we have sinned  
in wandering from your ways,  
in wasting your gifts,  
in forgetting your love.  
Have mercy on us, O Lord,  
for we are ashamed and sorry  
for all we have done to displease you.  
Forgive our sins,  
and help us to live in your light  
and walk in your ways,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news!  
There is no condemnation  
for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
For the law of the Spirit  
of life in Christ Jesus  
has set you free from the law of sin and death.  
Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.  
The old life has gone;  
a new life has begun.

**The Lord's Prayer**

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 the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,

Forever and ever. Amen.

**Opening Hymn #313: "Oh Worship the King" (V 1, 2, 5)**

Oh, worship the King, all glorious above;  
oh gratefully sing God's power and God's love,  
our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.

Oh tell of God's might, oh sing of God's grace,  
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;  
whose chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
and dark is God's path on the wings of the storm.

O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,  
while angels delight to hymn thee above,  
thy ransomed creation, in glory ablaze,  
in true adoration shall sing to thy praise.

**Responsive Reading**

**Isaiah 55:10-13**

<sup>10</sup> "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

<sup>11</sup> **so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**

<sup>12</sup> "For you shall go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall break forth into singing,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

<sup>13</sup> **Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;  
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;  
and it shall make a name for the LORD,  
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."**

**Prayer for illumination**  
**(Congregant Prepared)**

## Scripture

### Ezequiel 37:1-14

34 The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? <sup>3</sup>You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. <sup>4</sup>You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. <sup>5</sup>So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered, they became food for all the wild animals. <sup>6</sup>My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

<sup>7</sup>“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>8</sup>As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, <sup>9</sup>therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: <sup>10</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

<sup>11</sup>“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup>As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. <sup>13</sup>I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. <sup>14</sup>I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

### Sermon: God Calling

The vision of the valley of dry bones found in Ezekiel 37 is, for most of us, a very familiar passage of Scripture; often preached upon in relation to the topic of revival in the church. It certainly spoke to the future restoration of Israel. Today I’d like to share a few thoughts from a little different perspective.

The main character in the Scripture story is Ezekiel the Prophet. “Ezekiel” means, “God strengthens”. He certainly proved to be a tower of strength in the midst of a defeated

people. He was also strong in resisting the opposition of the nation who was bent on ignoring God.

**Ezekiel 2: 1-7 records God's calling on his life. He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." 2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.**

**3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. 4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says.' 5 And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them. 6 And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or be terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people. 7 You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. They are hard hearted and rebellious.**

God was making it abundantly clear to Ezekiel that this calling would be fraught with hard times and a hard-hearted people to deal with. It was a solemn commission for sure.

Ezekiel's boyhood years and youth had been spent under the rule of the righteous King Josiah; a time when the book of the law had been recovered during the renovation of the temple. These were years of a bright reformation period. The days under King Josiah's rule, were in stark contrast to the darkest day of his life to come; when the Lord announced to him the siege of Jerusalem, followed by the death of his beloved wife

#### **Chapter 24: 2, 15-18**

**"Son of man, record this date, this very date, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.**

**Ezekiel's wife dies: 15 "The word of the LORD came to me: 16 "Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears. 17 Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead."**

Only a person of strong faith and determined to be obedient to God's will could have met this command.

In his role as a priest Ezekiel was familiar with the temple, and worship rituals of the Israelite nation. After Josiah's death, the nation of Israel forsook God, and returned to idol worship. He would have watched the evolution of destruction taking place in this nation; leading up to the Babylonian conquest. How difficult to deal with these hard-hearted people; who ignored his messages from God.

He would have been about 18 years old when the first siege against Judea came.

The first phase of captivity saw Daniel and his friends led into captivity, and we all know the story of the lion's den experience, where God revealed, not only his power to save, but his love for his servant Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar saw the 3 Hebrew children in the fiery furnace and another figure like the Son of God amongst them 605 BC.

Ezekiel was among those taken captive in the second phase of the captivity, where in the Babylonians captured and removed all the wealthy and intellectual people, leading them in a procession to Babylon. The Babylonian strategy was diabolical. They wanted to destroy the foundation of the Israelite nation. As they marched the captives off to Babylon they effectively degraded and disempowered the nation and lead them to despair. They made certain that no priests, doctors, wealthy or intellectual people were left in Jerusalem. The third and final phase destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and captured any remaining citizens.

Thus: the culture, the homeland; everything near and dear to their hearts, was taken away from Ezekiel and the other Israelites. Some of the exiles were enslaved, or incarcerated, and many were allowed to settle in an area designated for them. Ezekiel, by divine providence, because God still had a purpose for His calling on Ezekiel's life, was one of the groups to live in the settlement of Tel-Abib, near the city of Babylon. It was located on the bank of the great Euphrates River. The Israelite people were deeply grieved; even more so, as they slowly began to realize they had brought this on themselves.

**Psalm 137 expresses the depth of despair of the people. It's a sad picture of a people reduced to being mocked and shamed.**

**<sup>1</sup> By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept  
when we remembered Zion.**

**<sup>2</sup> There on the poplars  
we hung our harps, <sup>3</sup> for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;  
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"**

**<sup>4</sup> How can we sing the songs of the Lord  
while in a foreign land?**

**<sup>5</sup> If I forget you, Jerusalem,  
may my right hand forget its skill.**

**<sup>6</sup> May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not consider Jerusalem  
my highest joy.**

**<sup>7</sup> Remember, Lord, what the Edomites did  
on the day Jerusalem fell.**

**“Tear it down,” they cried,  
“tear it down to its foundations!”**

**<sup>8</sup> Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,  
happy is the one who repays you  
according to what you have done to us.**

**<sup>9</sup> Happy is the one who seizes your infants  
and dashes them against the rocks.**

It was about 5 years into the exile, that God called Ezekiel to be, both priest and prophet. The 7 years prior to this, he had preached mostly repentance and judgment. His message had fallen, for the most part, on deaf ears.

His prophet and priest role combines. **Chapter 11: 16 says Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone." '**

God commissioned Ezekiel, to serve as a priest in their midst; and a channel of communication between themselves and the God they had so shamefully dishonored.

This turning point, and further expansion of Ezekiel's calling, took place during the final and complete destruction of the temple in Jerusalem which we will get to later on. Ezekiel was commonly called a seer; one who received many visions from God; relating to his present time and the future. He was strong, and fearless, and preached against sin; challenging the people to turn from the idolatry that had led them to their present situation.

But just about everything was going wrong in Ezekiel's personal life it seemed. He may have even been wondering where God and His promised blessings were; wondering what was going to happen next! Wondering why God had called him to be a priest, and a prophet. There was no way that Israel could get themselves out from under Babylonian captivity. He could see that plainly. The nation of Israel, for all intents and purposes, looked dead, and they continued to refuse listening to his messages from God.

Then the story in Chapter 37 takes place. God leads Ezekiel, in the Spirit, to a valley strewn with bones; and shows him the vision, commonly known as the valley of dry bones. The bones of, what appeared to be, people left to decay; possibly after a battle.

As far as his eye could see bones were strewn everywhere. Bleached in the sun; not a formed skeleton in sight; just bones, randomly scattered about the valley. God instructed Ezekiel, in the Spirit, to walk about among the bones; imposing the full effect of how desolate the situation was. It must have been a horrifying, hopeless scene.

These bones were scattered everywhere; miscellaneous bones scattered as far as the eye could see; depicting a strong image of the Israelite nation and their plight of hopelessness and grief in exile; feeling like their very bones were dried up, hope gone! Nothing left of the once proud nation. It was a stark depiction of the spiritual depravity of the nation, as well. I'm sure the message and impact were not lost on Ezekiel!

Their beloved city in ruins; the Israelite people were in despair. As it turns out in our lives often; their situation led them to finally start listening. Ezekiel's message had changed to one of consolation at this point. God always knows what we need and when we need it.

Little by little his pastoral presence and message began to sink in.

Ezekiel was a consoler, a herald of salvation, a prophet of the regathering of the nation of Israel to come; followed by God's restoration of the Temple worship and land returned to the redeemed.

His message was geared to the circumstances and the needs of the people God called him to shepherd; all the while speaking the truth. He reminded them that sin caused their exile; which would turn out to last for 70 years.

Ezekiel constantly stressed the sovereignty and the glory of the Lord and there would come a restoration of Israel for a believing remnant.

At the valley of the dry bones Ezekiel is surveying this nightmarish scene before him and I'm sure he was wondering what God had in mind bringing him to see this horrific scene. Then God asks him a very interesting question—"Son of Man, can these bones live?"

I can just imagine Ezekiel looking out over the carnage of the bone yard. It must have been an astonishing question; not to mention, perhaps a bit absurd. If it had been anyone else, other than God, asking the question; the answer would have been obvious. Of course not! But this was God asking and wisely, Ezekiel replies; "O Lord God, you know!"

He answered that way, in spite of the fact, that as far as he could see, the situation was plainly, and desperately hopeless. But Ezekiel was a man of God after all; a priest, from a family of priests; and he was drawing on his past knowledge of an omnipotent God!

When we find ourselves in times of despair, we need to remember the goodness of the Lord in the past and the promises of His Word.

**David says in Psalms 27:13**



**13 I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.**

This Scripture is a favorite of a pastor friend of mine who went through some rough times in his family growing up.

I can't help but wonder what Ezekiel must have been thinking as he surveyed the valley of dry bones. Had God brought him here to reinforce that their situation was hopeless; short of a miracle?

But faith arises in his heart, and he recognizes that this was the God of the universe asking him this question, and nothing is hopeless with God!

Step two in this interesting turn of events we read that God instructs Ezekiel to speak to the bones! To exercise his prophetic voice!

**37: 4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! 5 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath[a] enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"**

**7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.**

Amazingly the bones begin to respond with a rattling; and the process begins; slow and steady; but definite.

Reminds me of the verses **2 Samuel 5:24**

**24 When you hear the sound of shuffling in the trees, get ready to move out. It's a signal that God is going ahead of you to smash the Philistine camp."**

**1 Kings 18:44 The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'**

Something was about to happen, and was plainly starting to take place, as the bones began to rattle. Slowly and methodically the sinews, the flesh, the skin and the bodies were recreated.

Although they are resurrected, so to speak, in the form of the living; there is only the appearance of life. These are bodies without breath: no breath, no Spirit, no life! Remember God breathed life into Adam.

**John 6:63 connects the vision of Ezekiel with the ministry of Christ**

**“It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.**

This was most certainly the case there in the valley of bones that day too.

Then Ezekiel; at God’s instruction, called upon the breath or wind of God to instill authentic life into the bodies. It’s an amazing story! But what relevance has this ancient story for us today!

Well, the question God asked Ezekiel that day hasn’t changed. It is current, personal and relevant for each of us. Can these bones live?

**Albert Schweitzer commented –the tragedy of life is what dies inside a man while he lives!!!** Without the Spirit of God, we are empty shells.

Have we come to a place in our lives when we have left, or neglected our calling?

God gave Ezekiel a three-fold calling; to be a priest, a prophet and finally a shepherd. Each calling was specific to the situation and people he was to minister to.

We each have a calling from God as well. Our first and essential calling is to follow Christ of course.

What do I mean by calling? I mean a strong inner impulse, or urge towards a particular way of life, or career, or vocation; when accompanied by, conviction of divine influence. Your calling will become a passion for you.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit who guides us into the path of our calling in life. God created each of us to live out His calling; for His glory and our participation in His plan.

**Martin Luther coined the phrase “the Hound of Heaven that keeps chasing you” in reference to the Holy Spirit and His efforts to bring us to Christ.** The Spirit also leads us into our calling. I like this image of the Spirit relentlessly chasing us; trying to get our attention, following our life path; with the hope of us stopping, turning around and submitting.

When a person fully understands God’s calling; it becomes clear, unmistakable, and at times overwhelming. I’m almost certain, that Ezekiel felt overwhelmed in the role God called him to, at times.

The fact is; we as Christians, cannot just be spectators of life, and have any sense of peace, and perspective. It is how God ordained it to be.

There is an important truth to bear in mind. Circumstances of life come and go; but our calling does not.

**Romans 11:29 New Amplified Version.**

**For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [for He does not withdraw what He has given, nor does He change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call.**

It is important to note that; to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbor as yourself, informs each of our callings. We must be true to who God is calling us to be. We each have different, but equally vital callings in life; whether it is building houses, farming, teaching, nursing, being an artist, or a writer, a missionary, a mentor, a caregiver; the list is endless. The callings are as varied, and unique, as we are.

I have seen some people make some painful errors choosing to follow paths for the wrong reasons; parental pressure, peer pressure, unmet needs for acceptance, glory and approval seeking perhaps. I have also known some very broken individuals, who did not hear the voice of God and their calling. The still, small voice of the Spirit calling was drowned out by their focus on themselves and their circumstances.

It is marvelous to realize that we are a part of a beautiful mosaic of God's creation.

As I said; God's calling never goes away; but it does evolve, and if we stay open to the Spirit's leading, it can be a blessed journey. I didn't say easy mind you.

If you are here to day feeling like you are a dry bone or in a valley of dried bones. Take heart.

God had a call on Ezekiel's life and prepared him for the very difficult task of leading, teaching, admonishing and loving the wayward nation of Israel.

If you want to hear or refresh your calling start by devouring God's Word. Immerse yourself in it. Be prepared. Then, and only then, can you GO and DO for Him! It is so important to hide God's Word in our hearts.

Yes, dry bones can live!!

Never underestimate where you are called to serve God or the impact of your life, your example, your prayers.

Failure blurs our vision; but not God's. Be willing

So, let's ask ourselves some questions this morning;

What do I feel called to do? What am I good at?

Do I get confirmation from other trustworthy Christians that I am good at what I consider my calling.

Have you taken stock of your gifts; your God-given gifts?

They are an important part of ensuring you carry out your calling to the best of your ability.

Ezekiel was a part of God's plan for the time and season he lived in and it is the same for us.

God always has a person or a remnant of people He calls to do His will! It was no accident that Ezekiel was in Babylon during the time that he was.

It's important to remember that, though our calling never dies; it does evolve. Again, remember Ezekiel---first a priest, then a prophet and finally a shepherd or pastor.

Our calling won't always be enjoyable either---just ask Ezekiel! But following our calling will enrich our lives and grow us spiritually.

Your calling may not make you popular or even understood, by friends and family; but when you know, that you know, that God is directing your path, there is peace to be had and strength to be gained.

I need to say that we don't decide what our calling will be. I think of the many schools of prophecy that are common; esp.; in the States. I have known people who have decided they are going to be a prophet and sought out to be taught how! We don't decide we will be a prophet or a spiritual leader; without God's appointment it's a disaster!

I have found that seemingly God is never in a hurry—it can take years to develop our calling; meanwhile no experience along the way is ever wasted in God's economy.

Our calling may come to us as a young child and be nurtured as we grow; or it may take us by surprise! Never in my wildest dreams did I ever imagine being a federal prison chaplain! But it was a perfect fit for me. God knows! Ezekiel far removed from the Temple in Jerusalem; how could his education and training be of any value? God had called him to be a great prophet, as we know, alongside Isaiah and Jeremiah. It was

immense personal, professional and theological shock, he walked in; yet God would use all He had built into Ezekiel's life during his years of preparation.

When you look at your situation, and all you can see are dry bones, hope can feel diminished, if not gone. Maybe it's hard to image your situation ever changing. We often just acquiesce to our situation, and settle! Just to live it out! But be encouraged today: God has a plan and a purpose for your life!!! No matter the season or the reason you find yourself to be in.

Get into His Word, and He will speak to you. Yield to the Holy Spirit and He will breathe life into you.

At one point Ezekiel said –I sat there among them stunned for 7 days! He must have felt overwhelmed. But, at the same time, he was hopeful; even though the situation around him looked futile. He had experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and he knew he was commissioned by God and that God was empowering him. He would see again the nation of Israel restored and revived!!

The following is one of my favorite Scriptures and is my heart's reply to God whenever He calls.

**Isaiah 6:8 New Living Translation (NLT)**

Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me."

Let us pray!

Almighty God, You are the creator and sustainer of our lives. We give You thanks for the reminder today that You always have a plan and a purpose for our lives. May we be avid listeners to hear You calling and faithful followers to answer You; so that we may bring glory and honor to You; and other's lives may be touched because of the Spirit of God working through us. **Amen.**

**Hymn: "The Power of the Cross" (V 1, 3, 4)**

Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day  
 Christ on the road to Calvary  
 Tried by sinful men,  
 torn and beaten then  
 Nailed to the cross of wood.  
 This the power of the cross  
 Christ became sin for us

Took the blame, bore the wrath  
 We stand forgiven at the cross

(Refrain)

This the pow'r of the cross.  
 Christ became sin for us  
 Took the blame, bore the wrath.  
 We stand forgiven at the cross"

Now the day light flees,  
 now the ground beneath quakes as its maker bows his head  
 Curtain torn in two,  
 Dead are raised to life  
 Finished, the victory cry  
 This the power of the cross  
 Christ became sin for us  
 Took the blame, bore the wrath  
 We stand forgiven at the cross. (Refrain)

Oh, to see my name  
 written in the wounds  
 For through your suffering, I am free  
 Death is crushed to death,  
 Life is mine to live  
 Won through your selfless love  
 This the power of the cross  
 Son of God slain for us  
 What a love what a cost  
 We stand forgiven at the cross. (Refrain)

### **Invitation to Offering**

### **Offertory Prayer** **(Congregant Prepared)**

### **Closing Hymn #389: "Breathe on Me Breath of God" (V 1, 2, 3)**

Breathe on me, breath of God;  
 fill me with life anew,  
 that I may love what thou dost love  
 and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
 until my heart is pure,  
 until with thee I will one will  
 to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
 till I am wholly thine,  
 until this earthly part of me  
 glows with thy fire divine.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Loving and eternal God may we never take for granted the privilege of gathering together in Your house, and the freedom we have to worship and praise You. Creator God who nurtures and sustains all life: You are I Am; may we be who You created us to be and live in obedience to Your calling in our life.

Help each of us to discern our true calling –to fulfill our life’s purpose; using and sharing our greatest gifts and our smallest talents in loving our neighbor and serving those in need.

Empower us to do good work in the world; trusting that Your very presence strengthens our human inabilities and dissolves our limitations.

Loving God, we ask Your blessing upon us; Your church, that we would grow and flourish in Your love and grace, for the purpose to which You have called us individually and corporately.

May this Church be a strong and vital body of believers in this community; showing thru the ministries, the programs, and our lives that You are real, and that through Christ, and Christ alone, we are saved. We pray for Pastor Gerry and his family as they are away on vacation that You will restore, refresh and invigorate him. May they be well and safe and return to this place to continue the work of the ministry.

As Your people we are called to pray; so today we ask that You would guide us in this time of many shadows; keep us from despair when we see so much hatred and injustice around us. We pray for our indigenous people; that they might find healing for their souls and spirits.

We pray for peace and stability for those countries of the world where war ravages and so often the innocent suffer. Send us to do Your bidding Lord; to promote peace wherever we can; to show mercy and forgiveness.

To all living in grief and bearing the loss of loved ones, we pray they will be comforted; knowing that in You the circle will be unbroken.

We pray for those in our midst who are facing health issues and we ask that Your spirit would be with them and those who make decisions and care for them. May the healing virtue of Christ be in their bodies.

God some here today bear burdens that are too personal to express. You know the intents of their hearts. Please meet their needs.

Our children and youth, the elderly, those struggling in relationships, the financially compromised, and those battling mental illness come to mind today. We put them into Your loving hands this day Lord. May they feel Your Holy Presence caring for them, and our prayers undergirding them.

Remind us Lord to use our words for encouragement, and that often a simple greeting and smile can mean so much to the lonely.

Our governments at all levels need Your Holy Spirit to guide in their decision making. May the egos, pride and power plays, be set aside for the common good of the people they have been elected to serve.

We ask a blessing upon all who work faithfully and diligently each week to ensure this service can take place and everyone feels welcomed.

May we be ever mindful of Your Presence and guidance in the week ahead; so that we might glorify You in all we do and say.

**Amen.**

### **Benediction**

Go into your week knowing that you are loved, saved and empowered as a disciple of Jesus; called to share His love with everyone you meet. May the God who gives us this life to live, the Savior who walks at our side each day and the Spirit who fills us to overflowing with life abundant; grant to you peace and hope and joy. Go in peace now to love and serve the Lord and each other.