

Hybrid Worship for July 24, 2022
7th Sunday after Pentecost
(* please stand in body or in spirit
bold print is for all to share)

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: "Open Our Hearts" MV 21

Open our hearts, open our minds
Open our lives to you O loving God
Open our hearts, open our minds
Open our lives to you O loving God
Open our hearts

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: We gather in faithful community to nurture our spirit

All: We gather in faithful community to strengthen our faith

One: Let us open our hearts and minds to the teaching of the Spirit

All: Let us give thanks for this time together of prayer and reflection

One: Recreating and Sustaining God, we give thanks for this time together to listen, to sing, to pray, and to draw closer to you in faithful community. May this time of worship nurture each one of us in the way we need. May our spirits be rekindled with gratitude for the life we have. May compassion be our companion. We give thanks for your Presence in our lives, calling us to be our best selves. In Christ's name we pray Amen.

Opening Hymn: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" VU 664

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer

Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation

Dear God, we give thanks for places of simplicity and peace. Let us find such a place within ourselves.
We give thanks for places of refuge and beauty. Let us find such a place within ourselves.
We give thanks for places of nature's truth and freedom, of joy inspiration and renewal,
Places where all creatures may find acceptance and belonging. Let us search for these places
In the world, in ourselves, and in others.
Let us restore them. Let us strengthen and protect them and let us create them.
May we mend the outer world according to the truth of our inner life
And may our souls be shaped and nourished by nature's eternal wisdom. (Leunig)

Sung Response: "Spirit of the Living God" VU 376

Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me.

Scripture Readings: Keith Konyen

Psalm 138 from Psalms for Praying by Nan Merrill

I give you thanks O Blessed One, with my whole heart
Before all the people I sing your praise
I was humbled when I came to see that you dwell in me,
In the sacred Chapel of all souls; my gratitude knows no bounds
For you are the Holy One, the Life of our life
On the day that I called, you answered me; the strength of my soul you increased.

All the leaders of earth shall one day praise You when your spirit awakens in every heart
And they shall proclaim the new dawn of Light and Love!
Great will be the radiation of Your Glory
For even as You are the Most High, you are friend to the lowly
The arrogant close their hearts to your love and guidance.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble you preserve my life
You are a very Presence as I face my fears and doubts

Your strength upholds me.

You guide me as I pray to fulfill my purpose on earth
You do not forsake those who call upon you
You steadfast love and truth endures forever.

Luke 11:1-13

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation."

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your persistence,¹ he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your child asks for² a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

One: May these sacred readings comfort us, inspire us, and challenge us.

All: Thanks be to God.

Music offering: "Live My Life for Love"

Reflection: "Persistence and Prayer"

Hymn: "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" VU 356

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
And God's righteousness;
And all these things shall be added unto you.
Hallelu, Hallelujah!

Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and you shall find
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you
Hallelu Hallelujah!

We do not live by bread alone
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of God
Hallelu Hallelujah!

Offering Prayer:

Recreating and Sustaining God, we present our offerings of time, of skills, of finances. Guide us in the stewardship of these gifts. Help us discern how best to use them to help others. Remind us that we are your hands and feet in the world, and that through our actions we express your love for all of creation. Amen.

*** Sung Response: "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" VU 541**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise God all creatures high and low
Give thanks to God in love made known
Creator, Word and Spirit one.

Prayers of the People

One: Loving God, we pray for our troubled and hurting world

Two: Where there is conflict, help us sow peace

One: Where there is danger, help us offer safety

Two: Where there is hunger, help us provide food

One: Where there is illness, help us bring healing

All: Through the power of our prayers and your love, soften the hearts of those in power, that compassion and justice may guide their decision making, and bring peace, safety, and nourishment.

One: Where there is grief, help us speak solace

Two: Where there is loneliness, help us companion

One: Where there is hurt, help us bring forgiveness

Two: Where there is despair, help us foster hope

All: Through the power of our prayers and your love, soften all hearts, that compassion may guide our words and actions.

In Christ's name we pray

Amen

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

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 glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

Closing Hymn: "Spirit Open My Heart" MV 79

Spirit open my heart
To the joy and pain of living
As you love may I love
In receiving and in giving Spirit,
open my heart

God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender. R

Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory. R

May I weep with those who weep,
share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ,
may we welcome one another. R

**Commissioning /Blessing
(Sing together)**

**As you walk from here
As you walk from here
Walk with justice
Walk with mercy
And with God's humble care.**

Sung Amen

Sharon Konyen

"Persistence and Prayer"

Every morning about 6:15 am our dog Goldie paddles to the bedside and sticks her cold wet nose into my warm unprotected arm to remind me it is time for her walk. She does this every morning. Every single morning. Sometimes I say Goldie, go lie down, and she does, and I get a few more minutes of sleep. But without fail, a short time later she again comes to the bedside and sticks her cold wet nose into my warm unprotected arm until I finally get up. I know she won't leave me alone until I get up. She is persistence in action. Her persistence pays off. She asks and she receives.

Persistence is one of the themes of the passages from Luke. And persistence is linked to prayer. The story of the neighbours persistence is sandwiched between Jesus teaching the disciples to pray and the words 'ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened...These might be the very components of our prayers. Asking....seeking....desiring a door to be opened. A yearning for understanding, for rescue, for comfort, for direction.

Prayer and persistence. When we persist in something it usually means it is of importance to us, of value to us, or that we are in need. And we may not even realize how important something is to us until we recognize how persistent we are being in trying to attain it. We may be surprised to discover how much something means to us because of our persistence. Or we may be reminded of how important something is to us as a result of our persistence

It is often observed that prayer changes the one who prays. Maybe this is really what persistent prayer is all about. Perhaps persistent prayer invites us into change. We are given these words of hope in scripture, the hope that we will receive, the hope that we will find. But we are not told what we will receive. We are not told what we will find. We are not told what door will be opened. Perhaps persistent prayer is a window for us into what our values truly are. Perhaps it is a way of learning about ourselves and what is important to us. Perhaps it helps us understand our relationship with the Divine.

In my work as a hospital chaplain I've come across many people who tell me they have lost their faith in God. They prayed for healing, they prayed for remission, they prayed that their loved one would live, but their prayers were not answered. They were persistent in their prayers, they asked, but they did not receive. They turned to God for answers to unanswerable questions. These were good people, kind people, people who lived caring, generous lives. They lived a faith-filled life. And yet, in their time of need, when they beseeched God for a cure for themselves or their loved one, it did not come. They were hurt, they were bewildered, they were angry. They felt betrayed. What is the point of believing in God, they wondered, if in your time of need your prayers go unanswered?

If we are persistent in our prayers and do not receive the desired outcome, what might Jesus be trying to tell us here? I wonder if persistent prayer is a way to slowly enlarge our understanding of God. I wonder that if we persist in prayer, without a focus on outcome, we come to a different understanding of the Divine. Perhaps we learn that our relationship with God is not transactional. It is not a question of I do this and God gives that. It is not a give and take kind of relationship. Through persistent prayer and unattained outcomes, we are led to reflect on how we understand the Divine in our life. And so we are changed.

Placing ourselves into spiritual connection with the Divine through prayer helps us understand ourselves, our desires, our hopes, our fears. Persistent prayer helps us understand what it is that we really need, what it is that we value most, where we are most vulnerable, where we hold regret. On this journey inward perhaps we acknowledge the pain of not receiving, the sorrow of not finding, the wall where we were promised a door. And maybe in this most tender and vulnerable wound we discover that this is the exact place where God lays roots in us.

For we come to discern that God is not a magician who waves a magic wand and our troubles disappear. God is not an insurance policy that we cash in if we uphold our end of the bargain. The relationship is not transactional. Instead, if we can persist in prayer through our confusion, our uncertainty, our struggles, if we can continue to hold onto the hope given with the words ask and it shall be given, perhaps we discover a God who is our steadfast and loving companion on the journey of life. We come to understand that the power of the Spirit is with us through the bewildering, through the loss, through the uncertainty. We begin to recognize that we are not alone in facing whatever we encounter. We learn that we can endure with God as our companion, our support.

Maybe, we come to understand that the more we turn to the Divine in our need, in our brokenness, in our yearning, the more we truly understand ourselves. And in discovering more about ourselves, we open up more of ourselves to the presence of the Divine within us. As we enlarge our understanding of who we are, we create space for God to take up a larger presence within us. And we gradually move from a transactional relationship to a transformational one of companionship. God as a source of comfort, God as a source of strength, God as a steadfast loving presence in the face of all that hurts and makes no sense. And this felt sense, that we are not alone, that together with God we can endure, that is what gets us through. That is what we find when we seek. That is the door that is opened.

So let us be persistent in our prayers. Let us remember we are not alone. Let us ask, let us seek, let us desire a door to be opened. In so doing we become familiar with who we are at our core – a person who carries within the loving and steadfast presence of God, come what may. Thanks be to God. Amen.