

Hybrid Worship for February 5th, 2023
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany - Sacrament of Communion

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: "Give peace to every heart" MV 86

Give peace to ev'ry heart,
Give peace to ev'ry heart,
Give peace God,
Give peace God.

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: Called to be light,

All: we carry God's hope into the shadows of the world.

One: Called to be salt,

All: we strive to enhance the lives of those around us, with joy.

One: Called to live in God's reality,

All: we welcome everyone as siblings in faith.

One: Called to worship,

**All: we sing and pray and praise together
as a salty and light-filled family of faith.**

One: So now we pray together in one voice:

**All: Holy Source of Grace and Love,
you are as necessary to us
as salt is to ocean,
as light is today.**

**Help us to bring the illumination of hope and justice
to our communities and our world.**

**Guide us to where our saltiness of action and discernment
is most needed by your people.**

This day, God, send us the Light we need to savour the life you give.

**We pray in the name of your Brilliance,
your Crystal of all that is needed, Jesus Christ.**

Amen

Opening Hymn: "God of the Bible" MV 28

God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,
freedom or prison, you are our home.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

God in our struggles, God in our hunger,
suffering with us, taking our part,
still you empow'r us, mothering Spirit,
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Those without status, those you are nothing,
you have made royal, gifted with rights,
chosen as partners, midwives of justice,
birthing new systems, lighting new lights.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Not by your finger, not by your anger
will our world order change in a day,
but by your people, fearless and faithful,
small paper lanterns, lighting the way.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Hope we must carry, shining and certain
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,
bonding us gladly one to the other,
till our world changes facing the Cross.

Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful you do not change.
Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,
God always faithful, you do not change.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation:

Salt and light Blessing by Roddy Hamilton

In a world that is always asking us
to become something,
someone,
some success story,
In this place we say:
don't become,
be who we already are.

Don't become light –
be the light you already are –
this is what God anciently placed in you.

Don't become salt –
be the salt you already are –
it is in this way you are known to God.

For from these elements:
Salt and Light,
God uniquely crafted you.

Don't become anything –
be who you are,
and discover the one who loves you
in your be-ing.

Sung Response: “Lord, Listen to your Children Praying” **VU 400**

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 112 *The Inclusive Bible*

Alleluia!

Happiness comes to those who revere YHWH,
who revel in God's commands!
Their children hold power on earth;
the descendants of the just will always be blessed.
there will be riches and wealth for their families,
and God's justice will never be changed.
For the just, YHWH shines like a lamp in the dark;
God is merciful, compassionate and righteous.
Good people are generous,
and lend money without interest;
they are honest in all their dealings.
They are never shaken, because they love justice
and will leave an imperishable memory behind them.
They never fear bad news,
because their unwavering hearts trust in YHWH.
With peaceful hearts, they fear nothing;
and in the end they will triumph over their enemies.
Quick to be generous, they give to the poor,
doing justice always and forever;
their horn will always be lifted in honour.
The corrupt become infuriated when they see this;
they grind their teeth and waste away,
finally vanishing like their empty dreams

Matthew 5:13–16 *The Inclusive Bible*

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. But what if salt were to lose its flavour?
How could you restore it? It would be fit for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
"You are the light of the world. You don't build a city on a hill, then try to hide it, do you?
You don't light a lamp, then put it under a bushel basket, do you? No, you set it on a stand where it
gives light to all the house. In the same way, your light must shine before others so that they may see
your good acts and give praise to your Abba God in heaven."

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Music for Reflection

Reflection: Pass the salt, please

Hymn: “Beyond the Beauty and the Awe” MV 80

Beyond the beauty and the awe,
beyond the fear and dread,
we long, O God, to hear your word
to taste your transformed bread.

Our lives feel torn between the world
whose needs are grimly real
and empty talk of peace and joy
with distant, vague appeal.

Oh, teach us how to hear your voice
despite the traffic's din;
to keep the blasts of rancour out
and let your Spirit in.

In sound or silence, sight or smell,
may we some token find
that makes your living presence known
to body, soul, and mind.

Then help us live as Jesus taught,
as light and salt and yeast,
that others may be brought to share
your promise and your feast.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music: “When the Wind of Winter Blows”

Hymn of Dedication: “What Can I Do?” MV 191

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share

Offering Prayer

**All: May all the gifts we offer today,
and through our other ways of giving financially,
be at work in the world to bring:
your hope and our light,
your justice and our hands,
your love and our ‘saltiness’**

your grace and our gratitude.

Amen

Sacrament of Communion

Choir: "Bread of Life"

One: God be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: **We lift them up to God.**

One: Let us give thanks to God.

All: **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

One: When you came proclaiming creation,
God of wonder,
you brought forth what no eye had seen:
snowflakes drifting in a meadow,
hawks floating lazily in the sky.
You whispered what no ear had heard:
whale songs in the deeps,
a coyote caroling the moon.
You established what no heart believed:
justice for the most vulnerable,
healing for the broken.

Two: Day by day, you called us to your side,
but when evening fell, we slipped
into sin's enticing shadows,
dashing your dreams for us.
You sent the prophets to us,
relying on the Spirit
to give them the right words,
but we did not notice
as we practiced hubris.
So you asked Jesus to come,
dashing the hopes of the wicked.

So with those who do not fear
the good news which he brought,
we lift our voices in glad shouts of joy:

All (sung): " Holy, Holy, Holy" **MV 203**

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.

One: He came proclaiming your salvation,
God of Holiness,
your Child of salt and light.
For those in the shadows of mourning,
he brought light.
For those whose lives
have crumbled around them,
he rebuilds their hopes.

Two: For those who are separated
by the chasms of fears,
he stretches a bridge
so they can meet each
other in harmony.
For all who face death's uncertainty,
he went into that unknown,
coming forth to reassure us
that its power had been broken.

One: We remember that when Jesus ate with his friends,
he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it,
he broke it and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Each time you do this, remember me."

Two: Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,
passed it to his friends, saying:
"Drink. This cup that is poured out for you
is the promise of God, made in my blood.
Whenever you drink it, remember me."

As we seek to see him in our midst,
as we try to hear your Word of life,

we trust in that faith which is mysterious:

All: **Christ died, showing us the way to death;
Christ was raised, showing us the way to new life;
Christ will come, to show us the way to your heart.**

One: Here at the Table of grace,
the Holy Spirit proclaims life,
transforming these simple gifts
and the people gathered in this place.
As we taste the hope in the broken bread,
we would go to break the bonds of injustice,
and free the oppressed.
As we are filled with the cup,
we would be light to the world,
opening our pantry to the hungry,
wrapping a naked child in our love.

And when God's time is fulfilled
and we are gathered together
with our siblings
in the kingdom of heaven,
we will not keep anything bottled up,
but will shout our praises to you,
God in Community, Holy in One.

Two: At this time, we also remember all those
with whom you would have us share your feast.
We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .
all who are ill or alone . . .
all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .
all whom the world counts as last and least
We pray for your church and its varied ministries . . .
for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .
for our families and friends

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 960

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 trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil;
for thine is the kingdom and the
power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Breaking the Bread and Filling the Cup

(If you are worshipping in the sanctuary, you may come forward to receive the elements. If you prefer to stay seated, they will be brought to you. If you are participating on ZOOM, this would be the time to take bread and juice, and if with another you could serve each other with the words "Jesus Christ the bread of life" and "Jesus Christ the true vine.")

Prayer after Communion:

**All: Life-giving God,
may we, who share Christ's body, live his risen life;
we, who drink his cup, bring new life to others;
we, whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world.**

**Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us,
so that we and all your children shall be free,
and all creation will live to praise your name.
Amen.**

Closing Hymn: "We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection" VU 586

We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life in Christ.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,

raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
including all in circles of our love.

Commissioning :

One: To those huddled in the shadows of fear and worry,

All: God sends us to be light.

One: To those whose lives and hopes have lost all flavor,

All: Jesus sends us to be salt.

One: To a society where love is tossed aside as easily as a food wrapper,

One: Spirit sends us to be faithful carers of everyone we meet.

Blessing

Sung Amen

*Portions of our Call to Worship, Communion Liturgy and Blessing ©Thom M. Shuman and published at
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Rev Joanne's Reflection

I would hazard a guess that everyone here has some salt in their kitchens. Even those of us who no longer cook for ourselves probably have a bit of salt tucked away to add to a snack. It is both a very common element, and one that we actually need – in moderation - to be healthy and to thrive. I love salt on my French fries, or fresh vegetables like tomatoes, and many of us keep a salt shaker on our tables.

Salt enhances the flavour of foods, is a necessary chemical in much baking, and it is used in the manufacture of all kinds of products as diverse as salami and plastics. A natural crystal, it is found in sea water and in salt mines, in our own blood and sweat and tears. It can be used to preserve meat and other fresh foods, and has been used in this role for thousands of years. There is evidence that it has been mined for human use for up to 8,000 years. Salt can do many things, but one thing salt cannot do is actually lose its saltiness. It is an extremely stable mineral, and stays stable through time and through many reactions and combinations. If salt were to somehow become 'unsalty', then it probably wasn't salt to begin with!

Some scholars have written that in Jesus' time, salt was probably quite impure, mixed with other elements, and so could lose its flavour, and anyways Jesus was no chemist. I actually take quite the opposite view. I think that Jesus knew about salt's almost never-ending ability to keep its saltiness, and that this understanding is actually part of his thinking when he compares his followers – and us today - to salt.

We are the salt of the earth, Jesus tells us – basic and necessary, filling a real need in God's world. We can enhance the lives of those around us by what we do and what we say. We can be a constant and reliable reminder that God wants us all to experience the enriched taste of life, and we can offer

ourselves as the salt that brings out the extra flavour. If we are able to lose our 'saltiness', our ability to add to the lives around us, then perhaps we were never really God's salt of hope and love to begin with.

We can lose hope perhaps, when we face repeated challenges and struggles. Sometimes we may even lose faith when we are tired and grieving and feeling lost. We might lose our sense of direction, or our sense of peace, or even our connections to community, but we never really lose our saltiness as God's people. Perhaps there are times when we need a dose of someone else's salt, when our lives and circumstances may need enhancing themselves, but I believe we still retain our salty natures.

As Jesus pointed out, if salt were able to lose its flavour, it would just be tossed away and trampled, but Jesus also taught that God does not throw anything – and especially anyone – away. God did not toss away the disciples when they didn't understand what Jesus taught, God did not toss away the Israelite people when they wandered away from God. God did not toss away those who persecuted Jesus, or those who ignored the prophets, or those who society saw as disposable like tax collectors or women.

I believe that once we have decided to follow Jesus, to live out our lives as God's people, we become salty with God's touch, and nothing we can do will reduce that saltiness, that ability to impact the world and the people who are around us. The psalm writer describes our saltiness well, I think:

“Good people are generous,
and lend money without interest;
they are honest in all their dealings.
They are never shaken, because they love justice
and will leave an imperishable memory behind them.
They never fear bad news,
because their unwavering hearts trust in YHWH.
With peaceful hearts, they fear nothing;
and in the end they will triumph over their enemies.
Quick to be generous, they give to the poor,
doing justice always and forever”

When we work to bring better health services to vulnerable populations, we are salty. When we write letters or make phone calls to our representatives in municipal, provincial or federal governments demanding changes to create more and better housing that is truly affordable, we add salt. When we reach out to a stranger or even a friend in need of food, or clothing, or hope, we enhance their ability to enjoy life.

We are the salt of the earth – basic and necessary and full of whatever we need to bring something extra to our own lives, and the lives around us. Jesus saw it, God knows it, and it is up to us to live out this high calling to actually be the salt of God's earth. Perhaps we will need to share it at times, helping each other in the common work of justice-seeking and community building; perhaps we will need to replenish our own stores from time to time, but we are God's salty people, and we will never lose that aspect of who we are.

So let's decide to walk bravely together – adding our own distinct but salty tastes to create a faith community that is diverse and caring, and an identity in the wider community that speaks of the welcome of God's love, and an impact in the world that brings the flavours of God's love to all.

Amen