

Applewood United Church
An Affirming Community
Hybrid Worship for October 22, 2023
Peace Sunday

(*please stand in body or in spirit; **bold** print is for all)

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.

* Call to Worship and Opening Prayer: (*responsive*)

One: We remember the sun and warmth of summer. Light would play upon the grass and flowers would open in welcome to its greeting.

All: We remember the buzzing of the insects, the sound of birds in the trees. Their nests are home to eggs that celebrate the life within.

One: Now we see the changing of the colours, leaves turn yellow, red, and orange. They are a rainbow of transition.

All: Now we welcome the harvest and the migration of the birds and their young, so carefully fledged to adulthood and independence.

One: We know what is to come: snowy cold, our breath visible in winter air.

All: We know what is to come: a season of sleeping trees and flowers, awaiting their moment to unfold again in glory to God.

One: We celebrate God's creation, in every moment of every day throughout the year. We are the church, and we gather as God's people.

All: Hallelujah! All creation sings in praise!

One: Let us join in prayer:

God of our yesterdays and today, you have shared with us a world and universe that knows no bounds, and we have seen it in its majesty through eyes in awe and wonder. Your people throughout the ages have given thanks to you for your miracles and have delighted in your creation.

All: Help us to be the lovers of justice that you have asked us to be, to bring equity and righteousness to all. Prepare us for the sacrifices that we will need to make so that healing and love may live with us and our neighbours, both here in this community and throughout the world. Teach us to praise you, with all our hearts, our minds, and our souls, so that all may share in your grace and love for this world and its wonders. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

* **Opening Hymn:** "Come, O Fount of Every Blessing" VU 559

Come, O Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing
call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unfailing love.

Here I pause in my sojourning,
giving thanks for having come,
come to trust, at every turning,
God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God,
came to rescue me from danger,
precious presence, precious blood.

O, to grace how great a debt
or daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it,
wander from the love I've known:
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,
seal it for your very own.

Prayers for Reflection and Revelation

One: Dear creator, please hear us as we sing your glory among all the nations and praise your marvelous works among all peoples. Please hear us as we ascribe the glory due to you bringing offerings with the hope of entering the Kin-dom of Heaven.

All: But sometimes, we fall short in all that is due to you and your creation.

One: We do not always give you your due, dear God: we keep resources close to ourselves, for fear of it being taken, or used without our personal benefit.

All: Our time and talents are often hidden away, so that we do not need to face our fear in delivering your messages of love and glory.

One: We often expect others to brave storms, catastrophes, and personal suffering without our aid, ignoring your call to help the least of us.

All: We are sorry for what we have done and have left undone. Please forgive us, God. Amem. (*in silence, we offer our hearts to God*)

One: We are your church, dear God. We lift ourselves and our spirits up to you, knowing that you have been with us when we have been at our best and our worst. Even when we fear we have deserted you, you have not deserted us. We give you thanks, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sung Response: "I Am the Light of the World" VU 87

'I am the light of the world!

You people come and follow me!'

If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and the shepherds have found
their way home,
the work of Christmas is begun:

'I am the light of the world!

You people come and follow me!'

If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

To find the lost and lonely one,
to heal the broken soul with love,
to feed the hungry children with warmth
and good food,
to feel the earth below, the sky above!

'I am the light of the world!

You people come and follow me!'

If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

To free the prisoner from all chains,
to make the powerful care,
to rebuild the nations with strength of good will,
to see God's children everywhere!

'I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

To bring hope to every task you do,
to dance at a baby's new birth,
to make music in an old person's heart,
and sing to the colours of the earth!

'I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!
If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

Scripture Readings: Inclusive Bible

Exodus 33:12–23

Moses said to YHWH, "Look, you have told me to lead this people, but you have never told me who you will send with me. You have said to me, 'I know you by name,' and 'You have found favour with me.' So if I have found favour with you, teach me your ways so that I might truly know you, and that I might find favour in your eyes. Remember that these people are the nation you have chosen as your own." YHWH replied, "My Presence will go with you. Let this set your mind at ease." Moses continued, "If your Presence does not come with us, do not send us from this place. How can it ever be known that we have found favour in your eyes -- I, and your people--if you do not accompany us? It is your Presence alone that will mark us--I, and your people--from all others of the people on the earth." And YHWH said to Moses, "As you have asked, I will do, for you have found favour in my eyes, and I have known you by name." Then Moses said, "Please, show me your glory!" YHWH said, "I will make all of my goodness pass before your eyes, and I will pronounce my Name, I AM, in your presence: I will show my grace to whom I will show my grace, and I will show my compassion to whom I will show my compassion. But you cannot see my face," God continued. "No human can see my face and live." Then YHWH said, "Look--here is a place beside me, where you can stand on a rock. When my glory passes you, I will place you in a cleft in the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. When I remove my hand you will see my back; but my face, you must not see."

Matthew 22:15–22

Then the Pharisees went off and began to plot how they might trap Jesus by his speech. They sent their disciples to Jesus, accompanied by sympathizers of Herod, who said, "Teacher, we know you're honest and teach God's way sincerely. You court no one's favor and don't act out of respect for important people. Give us your opinion, then, in this case. Is it lawful to pay tax to the Roman emperor, or not?"

Jesus recognized their bad faith and said to them, "Why are you trying to trick me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin which is used to pay the tax." When they handed Jesus a small Roman coin, Jesus asked them, "Whose head is this, and whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied.

At that, Jesus said to them, "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's." When they heard this, they were astonished and went away.

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

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Choir: "Cantate Deo"

Reflection: What is Due?

*** Hymn:** "I Have Called You By Your Name" MV 161

I have called you by your name, you are mine;

I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.

I will not abandon you; all my promises are true.

You are gifted, called, and chosen; you are mine.

I will help you learn my name as you go;

read it written in my people, help them grow.

Pour the water in my name, speak the word your soul can claim,

offer Jesus' body given long ago.

I know you will need my touch as you go;

Feel it pulsing in creation's ebb and flow.

Like the woman reaching out, choosing faith in spite of doubt,

hold the hem of Jesus' robe, then let it go.

I have given you a name, it is mine;

I have given you my Spirit as a sign.

With my wonder in your soul, make my wounded children whole;

go and tell my precious people they are mine.

Introduction to the Offering

Gift of Music: "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross"

*** Hymn of Dedication:** "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" VU 575 verses 1 & 2 only

I'm gonna live so God can use me

anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I'm gonna live so God can use me

anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I'm gonna work so God can use me

anywhere, Lord, anytime!

I'm gonna work so God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

*** Prayer of Dedication:**

All: Creator of all wonders, who has given us the world in which we live and work. We lift to you our shared efforts to do as you have asked us to do so often in the past: to love you, to praise you, to bring peace in your name, and to love our neighbours as we would love ourselves. Please accept our gifts, as we give them up to you in gratitude. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Prayers of the People

Dear God, who has created and is creating, please teach us to be your church.

Teach us to invite in your love, through the teachings of Jesus Christ, the child you had sent to seek us out as your children, so that his wisdom may bend and mold us to become your living word.

Teach us to accept the whispering and rushing wind of the Holy Spirit, so that we may hear the truth, know the truth, and speak the truth.

Teach us to know what is your due and how we might offer it to you, with open hands and open hearts.

Teach us to let go of our fear, to be carried by your building inertia of glory and love, and not be swept along by the weight of our history.

Teach us to hear your silence and sense the ache of the broken hearts of your people, and not just the loud horns of triumphalism and self-righteousness.

Teach us to bring love and peace to all we meet: to the strangers we have not met, to those whom we have disagreements with, to those who we have named and have named us as enemies.

Teach us to bring a salve of healing to those who are injured by the hate and rhetoric and hyperbole of divisionism.

Be with the many and uncountable who suffer today, whether through war, disasters, illness in mind or in body.

Be with the many and uncountable who live without shelter or home, who have not enough to eat or drink, who need medical care, who need a loving hand and warm smile.

Be with this beloved faith community, and with those whose families and friends are intertwined with all who are here and who surround this sacred place. Be with us all, so that we know your peace, feel your loving touch, grow with your strength, and bravely embrace your word to see the glory of your Kingdom.

And now we pray in silence for those who are in our hearts. (silence)

In Jesus' 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 the glory are yours,
now and forever.

*** Closing Hymn: “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” VU 333**

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver;
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee,
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise

*** Commissioning /Blessing**

*** Sung Amen VU 974**

Brian Takayesu's Reflection: What is Due?

May the truth be known, may the truth be heard.

When thinking about the gospel passage that was read today, I always believed that this was a jackpot winner for the amount of juicy theology that could be discussed. But today I am reminded that this was

one of Matthew's writings, and it is important that we give a little more thought and care, especially that we need to view it in context of the situation.

Here we see Jesus, being sought not only by the Pharisees, but also the Herodians, who, from my understanding, were political acolytes of King Herod. Seeing these two groups together likely rang a few alarms for both the surrounding bystanders and among the disciples. Moreover, the start of the conversation with Jesus was an array of complements, which likely also was a warning sign. It is at that point that one of this gathering asked the question "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

"It's a trap!" shouts Admiral Ackbar from "Return of the Jedi"...okay, I can't take credit for that one, as I got it from Pastor Erik Thompson who wrote one of the articles I read on this passage, but it comes to the same thing. The gathering of these theo-politicals had thought that their question was a no-win situation for Jesus. If he said "no, of course it is not right to pay the taxes" then he would be hauled away, branded a seditious rebel and summarily exiled or executed. If he said "yes, of course we should be paying the taxes", then Jesus would be siding with the Roman oppressors, and would lose all credibility with his followers. I can just imagine the long day of meetings that took place to form the exact wording of that question.

But Jesus did not fall for it. He asked for a coin, so that he could see it, and they brought him a denarius. Although I am sure that Matthew, the tax collector, is trying to tell us something here when a group of Pharisees and Herodians would "happen to have" a Roman denarius on themselves, but I am going to walk away from that observation and keep us on the main story. Jesus, looking at the coin, asked whose image is on it, even though he well knows that it is Caesar's. I imagine Jesus flipping the coin back to the owner, and simply stating "Give Caesar what is due Caesar, Give God what is due God".

Now we see the importance of context with Matthew's chronicle of this event. I say that, because, as long ago as my childhood, I have known many who took the statement "Give Caesar what is due Caesar", completely out of context, and used it as the Christian call to accept the separation of Church and State.

But in context what really happened was no less than another miracle. In Jesus's wisdom, he had destroyed his adversaries' arguments, and had won the no-win scenario that they tried to snare him in. He told them that we need to stick with God, and not be tempted by the materiality of the situation.

But then, Matthew's writings leave us with a far more "interesting" question to answer today. Jesus also told us to "Give God what is due God". And what then is due God? What is due?

Jesus did not take a side on the taxation issue and I feel, by doing that, he signaled how we were to follow. I have to admit, I feel totally overwhelmed sometimes with the number and scope and urgency of the issues we see today. It seems like there are countless conflicts, whether among countries or political parties, religious factions, or what crypto coin I should be purchasing. And neither side is budging an inch against the other. And all of them want us to take a side. In fact, all those who are deep in the rhetoric or vitriol of a particular situation, believe that we must take a side: either/only, true or false, us versus them. There are those who believe, and will try to convince us, it is the basest act of cowardice not to choose a side.

So...what is due?

Jesus's wisdom, the love of God and the magic of the Holy Spirit...they are all due. More importantly, we are asked to provide love so that we make space for the trinity to do its work. Just because we feel that the situation, any situation where lines are being drawn, that God is not there, then we would be wrong. God is there, with us, with all, and really only needs time and space to bring the healing that we so desperately need. Just like Moses with God, talking about the frustration that God (and likely Moses) felt about leading the Israelites, God did not abandon them, and promised to continue to lead them. Love continued to be the choice.

So, we are called. We are called to love. We are called to praise. We are called to see the glory of God, even if we can only see God's back, as Moses did so long ago. We are called to search for God, even though, like the shepherd in a barren land, God is also searching for us. We are called to be the church.

In his wisdom, Jesus did not want his followers to hate their oppressors, but to love God. And, yes, to love their neighbours as we would love themselves. This is the real good news of this passage, so difficult to see without the context, so simple, so complicated, so complex, so infuriatingly radical, so frustratingly confusing, so awesome and awful and full of awe...so much like Jesus. So much like the truth.

We are born in love to live in love to touch and be touched by love everlasting.

This is what is due. Thanks be to God. Amen.