

# **Worship with McClure United Church**

January 31, 2021

## **Announcements**

### **Reopening Update**

The Building Access Task Group continues to monitor public health measures as well as vaccine progress and overall caseloads. Although the province permits up to 30 people at worship services, the Task Group, together with the Board and Staff do not feel that in-person worship would be good ministry for McClure at this time.

Worship, Bible Study, Congregational meeting, Men's and Women's gatherings, and more continue to happen online. Check our website or Facebook page for updates. The exciting news is that Amy McClure House residents have received their first dose of the vaccine.

If, at any time you want to talk to a minister, please phone the church office at (306) 373-1753.

### **Plant a Heart for Refugees**

Say goodbye to 2020. We are collecting donations to support ongoing and upcoming refugee sponsorship by McClure. For every \$20 received during the month of February, a heart will be “planted” in the snowbanks in front of the church. Cash, cheque or e-transfer is accepted.

Let's make it a really big garden!

### **Women's Gathering**

A wonderful group of faith filled McClure women meets once a month, 8am on a Saturday morning for conversation and connection. You are welcome to join in via Zoom. Send a note to Laura if you would like to join in, as she will be taking on leadership while Debra is away.

Next gathering is February 13.

Leave your PJ on or get dressed up, pour yourself a cup of coffee and turn on your commuter or tablet – click on the zoom link and connect.

## **Debra's Sabbatical Leave Begins February 1st**

The essence of sabbatical is rooted in the biblical practice of the Sabbath day described in the creation story. Jesus kept this practice when he took time in his ministry for renewal. He often went away to pray and reflect in silence and meditation "on mountain tops and by lakesides".

The daily practice of ministry may involve the pressure of many tasks compressed into too few hours, leaving little opportunity for reflective, prayerful time. In the context of ministry, sabbatical time is for learning through reflection, revitalization and recreation.

Debra will begin her sabbatical February 1, 2021 and will return to us July 19, 2021. She will be attending a preaching conference and taking a class at the Atlantic School of Theology virtually and will be doing some professional reading as well as meeting with a Spiritual Director.

## **February 7th Worship Celebration**

Laura is putting together a little something for the February 7th worship service. We need to remind ourselves and others that we continue to be the church even without access to the building.

She is looking for people willing to contribute to this service. Specifically, people who are willing to make a video of themselves talking about how they have appreciated McClure during the pandemic. Perhaps you have enjoyed worship, or a study group or one of the outreach projects? Maybe you've enjoyed the congregational check ins, the phoning tree or a pastoral phone call?

If you are willing, please let Laura know ASAP at [laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org](mailto:laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org). We will require the videos by February 2nd.

Lets celebrate all of the ways that God continues to work through and in us.

## **Congregational Meeting Reminder**

On Sunday, February 7th, all members and adherents of McClure United Church are invited to participate in a congregational meeting, the primary purpose of which is to consider the 2021 Operating and Capital budgets.

The meeting will be called to order at 11AM and will be convened using the Zoom computer conferencing platform.

More information can be found on our website at <http://mcclureunitedchurch.org/congregational-meeting>.

### **Zoom Bible Study**

An opportunity to read, learn and discuss the Bible with other UCCan folks. Each week we will engage with one lectionary passage for the upcoming Sunday.

Beginning February 3rd and happening every Wednesday at 1pm.

To register, visit our website.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

### **Scripture Readers Needed**

Are you interested in reading scripture for our Sunday morning services? We are looking for a variety of people of different ages to share this ministry with us.

Generally people video themselves on their phone or computer and send it to our video producer by Friday of each week. If you would like to participate but do not have (or are not comfortable with) technology, we can help!

We would like to create a reading schedule until the end of March. If you are interested, please contact Laura at (306) 291-5838 or email [laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org](mailto:laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org).

### **Opening Prayer/Call to Worship**

Worship is a time when we hear God's call and all that God is calling us to be.

Worship is a time when we recognize God's grace, abundant and overflowing.

Worship is a time of revelation, a time when we see things for the first time or in a new light.

Let us open our lives to receive God's call, recognize God's grace, and see God's light.

### **Prayer:**

God even if we were able to speak every language in the world even if we were fluent in languages of Angels, without love we are just a self-important noise.

God of love we look to you for healing.

Even if we have the gift of prophecy and can probe the deepest mysteries of life, even if we know everything there is to know, even if we have the faith to move mountains, without love we are nothing.

God of love we look to you for meaning.

Even if we give everything we have to help others, without love all these sacrifices do us little good.

God of love we look to you for transformation.

Let your love be our compass our treasure our guiding light.

For Love has the staying power to endure everything that comes.

Love keeps hoping when there is nothing left to hope for.

Love never fails.

Amen.

### **Scripture**

#### **Isaiah 40:21-31**

<sup>21</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? <sup>22</sup>It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; <sup>23</sup>who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. <sup>24</sup>Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he

blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble. <sup>25</sup>To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. <sup>26</sup>Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

<sup>27</sup>Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”? <sup>28</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. <sup>29</sup>He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. <sup>30</sup>Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; <sup>31</sup>but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

### **Reflection**

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts reflect your wisdom and give us strength for the living of our days.

How are you doing my friends?

I must admit I am feeling very tired.

This past week, as I prepare to disconnect for a time of sabbatical starting Monday the list of things to do has been long. Though completing each task and meeting each deadline has felt good – I am feeling very weary. There is another component to my tired however and that is - I'm tired of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I miss seeing you and hugging you and sharing food with you and all the other things we used to enjoy doing together before this plague began. I'm tired of worrying about the ones that are sick, the ones who are so very alone, the ones that are grieving, the ones that are on the front lines and the ones that are not staying connected to friends and family because of the lack of tech and the ones that are struggling with their mental health. I'm tired of worrying about families with kids and all the juggling they are doing to keep everyone learning and healthy and happy  
I'm tired of preaching to a camera and trying to worship myself, in my office or living room. I'm tired of being nervous every time I head out the door

and I'm tired of waiting and hoping and longing to be able to make plans again.

I wonder if you're feeling tired too? There is a technical term for what we're all feeling and that is covid fatigue. It's nice to know that my tiredness does not come from lack of character in me, but rather as a result of the circumstances we are currently living in but still I'm tired.

I was less tired the Sunday I headed over to Amy McClure house to see the residents there received their first dose of vaccine. The energy and hope with which they rolled up their sleeves was inspiring and their joy lifted the weight of this pandemic for a moment - but this week with news of the suspension of the arrival of more vaccines and the slowdown of the number of doses being delivered has been hard to hear. Doctor Tam, Canada's chief public health officer has offered many reassuring words in the midst of this new news. She assures us that this is just a blip on the screen, that the vaccines will be rolling out again soon and that the delays are temporary. One of the things Dr. Tam says that lightens my heart is "this pandemic **will** come to an end" - she is hopeful for the year ahead.

Into my tiredness, this week, came this beautiful passage from Isaiah that our friend Rev. Bill Shank read for us – all the way from Vancouver Island where he and Carol are now living. This passage is written to a people who have been in exiles in Babylon. Toward the end of nearly 60 years in exile there is suddenly a hope that Cyrus will allow the captives to return to their original homelands - this was nothing less than a miracle from God to those who have been struggling, lost and alone.

Even as the people receive this good news it became clear that the people had doubts and concerns. It would take a great deal of energy to make that journey home again and they worried about what they would find when they got there. What new challenges would they face, undoubtedly things won't just be the way they once were. The words we find in Isaiah 40 each echo what the people are feeling. We hear the peoples doubt and wonder whether God is still with them. And if God is there, they wonder if God has anymore planned for them.

Their worry and concern, their tiredness mirrors our own  
Isaiah asked the tired and doubting exiles,  
I ask you also:

*“Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.”*

If you're feeling tired right now, you're certainly not alone. Covid Fatigue is a thing. Be gentle with yourself, take a nap, take a walk, breath deeply, eat a second cookie or pour yourself a bubble bath.

Then let the words of Isaiah soak into your bones. As Christians, we know the ultimate source of our strength, our hope, and our power to endure is the God power who renews our strength and lifts us up with wings like eagles.

I invite you to take a moment, to think about those who are renewing your strength who are lifting you up. Perhaps it's the grocery clerk who scans your apples and cans of soup and manages to smiles at the corner of her eyes when she looks at you. Perhaps the one lifting you up is a child who has a very hard time sitting still in front of the computer screen but whose face completely lights up when they notice you. Perhaps it's the neighbor whose name you don't know who is shoveled your sidewalk after every dump of snow. Or perhaps it is the one who sends you silly Facebook post of a kittens sitting in a boxes or silly quote, in the hopes it will make you giggle and brighten your day.

Perhaps it might also be wise for us, in this time of worship, to think about how we, in our weariness, renew the strength of others and lift up others with wings like Eagles.

Perhaps we have taken a moment and penned a word of love and sent it on to someone we love. Perhaps we've made yet another phone call

alongside a thousand other calls because we know another call will ease the anxiety of the one who answers, hello. Perhaps we are the one who checks with our neighbour to see if there's anything they might need from the grocery store. Perhaps we have been the one standing outside the nursing home or care home window - in the cold waving at a grandparent and holding up We Love You signs.

We are all tired. But we are going to get through this. For have you not known, have you not heard.

The Lord is the everlasting God the creator of the ends of the earth, God does not faint or grow weary, God's understanding is unsearchable God gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

### **Blessing**

Friends let us continue our journey walking in love

Let us care for each other and care for the earth

Let us seek Justice and make Peace.

God goes before us so let us live our lives boldly.

And may the grace of Jesus the Christ

the love of God and the

companionship and comfort of the Holy Spirit be with us

this day and every day

Amen