

## Worship – August 22, 2021

### **Announcements**

Welcome to worship with McClure United Church.  
We do our best to be a church of welcome and mission.

The office is open this week Tuesday – Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. Our office administrator is away on holiday this week and Irene will be covering for Avyn. If you can delay popping in till Avyn is back that would be helpful.

I can be found in the church office during the week though Wednesdays I work from home.

Calling the church office is a good way to connect with me and all the information about our events can be found by checking the website or Facebook page.

I want to remind you about in person coffee time Friday mornings at 10am in the church parking lot. Bring along a lawn chair and your favorite beverage and we will gather for a visit. Everyone is welcome.

No doubt you have heard the devastating news coming out of Haiti and I know some of you would like to help. Financial donations can be made through the United Church of Canada's Emergency Fund. You can make donations to the fund by going to the United Church of Canada website. Donations to the church go directly to our partners on the ground in the effected regions – you can be assured your funds go to good use.

I know Eden has some new announcements for us and so I will turn things over to her.

**Opening words/ candle lighting** (adapted with help from Richard Bott)

In the face of an oncoming storm  
in the face of an unwinnable battle

in the face of a grieving world

**God's love is sure**

in the face of a boat overturning

in the face of an immovable foe

in the face of a grieving church

**God's love overcomes**

in the face that looks back from the mirror

in the face that I notice beside me

in the face of the known and the strange

**God's love lives**

With the best of who we are

in spite of the worst of what we can be

**God's love lives**

We **light this candle** to remind us of God's love for us and for the world.  
We light this candle and remember God's promise to be a light for us each  
and every day.

**Opening prayer**

We come to this time of worship seeking your blessing God  
we of all genders and all ages  
we come to receive your teaching  
we come to be shaped by you.

We come in worship seeking encouragement, hope, direction and peace.  
We come as we are - lift our drooping chins, turn us toward the light and  
call us forward.

How endless in your love for us. In you we are home. Amen.

**Scripture Reading**

**Psalm 84**

<sup>1</sup>How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

<sup>2</sup>My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

<sup>3</sup>Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

<sup>4</sup>Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.

<sup>5</sup>Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

<sup>6</sup>As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

<sup>7</sup>They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

<sup>8</sup>O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!

<sup>9</sup>Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed.

<sup>10</sup>For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness.

<sup>11</sup>For the LORD God is a sun and shield; God bestows favor and honor. No good thing does the LORD withhold from those who walk uprightly.

<sup>12</sup>O LORD of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you.

***May God bless to our understanding and our living these words of Holy Scripture.***

**Reflection: Rev. Debra Berg**

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you O God, our Strength, and our Redeemer. Amen.

There has been lots of talk these past few weeks about our church building. In particular talk about how to open for “in person” worship. It is exciting to think about being together again in our common worship space. We have already taken some baby steps as we figured out how to be safely open for funerals. In anticipation of our return, chairs were cleaned and the floors washed and polished. Banners have been dusted off and hung and plans for fixing the sound proofing cloth, that is drooping, is in process. We have fired up the sanctuary computer and projectors and we have put fresh batteries in all the places one needs to put fresh batteries. Elin and Shirley have got our instruments, the piano and the organ ready to go and have even been practicing as well as offering music for the funerals we have hosted.

Psalm 84, that Muriel read for us, touched my heart this week as it is a celebration of the temple as the dwelling place of God. The Psalm speaks of traveling to the temple in Jerusalem and of the awesome experience of entering that holy place. The Psalmist celebrates that there is nothing that quite compares with the temple - as the place that God is present to us. This psalm was most likely spoken and sung by pilgrims - who were looking for God – by those who desired to be in the Divine presence.

For the people of that time the Temple was a place to come home to. Even the sparrow builds a nest, and finds a home, in the temple. In the temple according to verse 3 - I meet "my King and my God," a double title which refers both to the ultimate power of God and the God of our personal lives. An experience in the temple could be both grand and intensely

personal. This Psalm was a reminder that God would meet Israel in a particular place.

I believe God continues to meet us in particular places.

We all need holy places; we all need a home. This past week was a very busy week for many of us as we opened the church building to three families who were saying goodbye to loved ones. And those loved ones were church family members. It was lovely to see several members of McClure United Church come to help support and care for the Davidson, Webb and Millar families. During the receptions afterward, as we drank coffee and enjoyed a sweet - I heard several McClure Church folk say how good it was to be in the church building - to be home again. It is an amazing thing to be in the temple. It is an amazing thing to come home.

I think this need to come home or be home is why for many the pandemic has been or is so very difficult. Many of us could not come or be home during lock down and that was hard. This summer has been good for our spirits as many have been able to travel again. Summer vacation is designed for home coming. Students return home from school and young parents bring their little ones home to grandma and grandpa's so that they can rest and connect in a new way to home. Summer give us time to travel to those landscapes that ground us and are home to us. For some that is where the waves crash against the shore and for others it is where the mountains play with sky and for others it is where there is nothing but sky and more sky. We are a mobile society. It is becoming a small planet. Home is important to our well being – we need home and sometimes we have to find home, or make a home, wherever we are.

That is what God's people in exile – those who would have sung the 84 Psalm where saying – they wanted to be home. They wanted to be in

that place where God was present. This is what the church tries to live out. When we are at our best we are a people with open hearts, open minds, open doors - creating a place to come home to. ///

I received a note earlier in the year from someone who worshipped with us for awhile and then moved away. Their life, like many of our lives was a path of healing. This person gave thanks for our church and the people of the church, they were grateful for the support and care received and was so grateful that what they could give was so warmly received. McClure was their home.

For most of us the Church is a home. A place to believe, a place to belong, a place to become. A place of safety. A home.

We need to come home to safety, home to grace, home to God and the 84th Psalm teaches us this truth. I love the translation that is found in Eugene Peterson book the message:

“One day spent in your house, this beautiful place of worship, beats thousands spent out on Greek island beaches.”

There is the temple, the sanctuary. We look around and we see its beauty and maybe we remember something from the past, a wedding or a baptism or a stirring anthem or a word spoken to us by a preacher that seemed to be just what God might want to be saying to us. I have had weeks that were difficult--more negative than positive, more going out than coming in and I have sat down in our sanctuary, and I could almost hear “come home, come home, you who are weary, come home.”

The temple can be and is a place to know God – to be home in God.

Psalm 84 leads us to a further truth and that is that God chooses to dwell among us.

The temple is a physical place; you can go to and then in the Gospels, Jesus teaches us that his body is the temple, and that if it is destroyed God will raise it in three days (John 2). In Jesus the fullness of God's presence dwells. And that is temple.

Then later, in the letters of Paul, we discover that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit - God dwells in us, and among us. We are the temple of God.

God's temple is in the hearts and lives of a transformed people. When someone comes to worship in a church, they may discover a beautiful sanctuary. And then they meet someone, and there is an acceptance, and a divine/holy love shared. And then they/we begin to see each other and we realize that it is the people who are also the temples. God is interested in holy places but God is just as interested in holy people.

And that is the business we are in, the business of building a temple, of offering shelter in the storm, shelter to the spiritually homeless.

God's people – you and I - are in the construction business. We are building something. To me it is the most important thing in the world, because it affects every other dimension of our lives. Worshipping in a holy place, being in the temple, being reminded that God not only lives in our temples, but that God lives in each of us. - That is our mission.

To be the temple, to be the dwelling place of God, is to say, with our words and with our actions, "This is a house of prayer for all people." To say, with our words and with our actions to one another, "You are a temple of the Holy Spirit and God dwells in you." To say, with our words and actions, "Come home, come home, you who are weary, come home."

May God grant us the wisdom and grace to be in the construction business. The construction of temples of brick and mortar – home to the

searcher. And temples of the heart – home to love and justice – rest and renewal. Home for you and me. Home for all.

Amen

### **Pastoral Prayer**

God of creation we give thanks for creations beauty and its' mystery. We have so much to learn about our interconnection to our planet home. We give thanks for cooler days and evening breezes, for life and growth in forests, fields and gardens. We give thanks for all those who are in the struggle to contain forest fires and for those who care for the animals displaced by the destruction. We pray for farmers who care for the land and who now struggle with the aftermath of a year of drought. We remember also all those dealing with the earthquake in Haiti. We pray that medical support might arrive quickly, and that the might people have the strength to build again.

God of peace and mercy our world is marked by violence and war shouts, filled with anger, hatred and malice can be heard across the globe. We think particularly today of our siblings in Afghanistan, we pray for peace and harmony. We pray that calm might fill the earth and that all people will experience your justice.

God in whose image we are created our world is divided along many lines we see each other separated under the categories of race, religion, gender, orientation, ethnicity and economic status rather than as human beings made beautifully diverse. We pray that we might learn to see each other as one family - open us to the truth that our lives are bound together.

It has been a difficult year but we celebrate the opportunities for rest that summer brings and the opportunities many of us have had to go home, to be with family and friends. We give thanks for our relationships with each other, help us to honor them by never taking them for granted

God of renewal and refreshment the church is called to witness to a life of abundance, forgiveness and grace that is found in you. We pray that we



who call McClure United Church home and all our siblings may be empowered to live out this call. Help us never stop learning about you and by your spirit teach us your way and give us courage to live as you desire.

Tender hearted God among our families and friends we know that some are suffering from disease and pain - from grief and loneliness from fear and despair - God we pray for these people, so precious to us, we pray for relief,, for peace, for the ability to sleep well and rise encouraged each new day. Help us as providers of comfort and care to be present to our loved ones.

God you alone know the secrets of our hearts here are personal prayers now in the time of silence....

We continue to pray as our teacher has taught us to pray:

Our Father and Mother, 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 those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### **Benediction**

We leave this time of worship and go to enjoy the last few days of this summer season;  
at home or away God will be with us.  
In good times and challenging times,- God will support us  
As we face our own challenges. God will steady us.  
As we face challenges as a church, God will work with us  
As we strive to welcome others, God will call us to open hands and hearts.  
We have confidence,  
we go in hope,  
for God goes with us.

Amen

