

# Worship for November 21 - Reign of Christ Sunday

## Welcome and Announcements

Welcome to worship with McClure United Church.

I am so glad you are here caring for your spirit and connecting to your community of faith.

I can hardly believe that it was March 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 that we held in person worship in our church building. That was 20 months and some 90 ish Sundays ago. We have learned so much and continued to be a vibrant church through it all. I am excited for our future.

With a bit of trepidation and yet a whole boat load of good energy we are planning for a return to in person worship this coming Sunday - the first Sunday of Advent... November 28th.

I am so looking forward to gathering again with others in the sanctuary on Sunday morning... and I am also so very that we now have the technological ability to **include** all those who are not able or not yet ready to return to in person worship. You will have received more detailed information about the protocols in today's email.

I'm going to just give you the Coles notes version here.

We will be offering two worship times... 9:15 and 11am... and are limiting numbers at each service to 75 people to allow for some physical distancing. We are putting into place other safety protocols -- everyone will be required to pre-register for worship to ensure that we don't go over our limit and you will also be required to show proof of vaccination either at the time of registration or prior to worship on Sunday morning. You can pre-register in a few different ways... you can register in person by dropping by the office during regular office hours – Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday 9-3:30 or you can email your intention to attend - to the church office anytime or you can phone the church office Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday between 9am and noon. All registrations... by phone, email or drop in must be received by noon on the Friday prior each Sunday's worship.

To simplify things on Sunday morning, it is our hope that as many of you as possible will provide your proof of vaccination prior to Sunday morning. You can either, pop into the office to show your proof... or you can email it - If you are comfortable with emailing your proof of vaccination, it will be deleted immediately after being seen. We will not be keeping copies of your proof of vaccination on file for privacy reasons... a note will be made that your proof has been seen - so you will only need to show your proof the first time you register for worship. We do not want to exclude those of you who are unable to receive the vaccination so we will also accept a negative covid test result and it must not be dated more than 72 hours prior to worship.... so that's Thursday at noon. If this is the option you chose, please be sure to check the detailed email for which covid tests are accepted – there are some limitations. And finally... for those of you not able to or not quite comfortable yet attending in person worship, we will be livestreaming the 9:15 service. This means you will be able to watch the service in real time from the comfort of your home. The service will continue to be recorded, so you can watch later in the day or week.

What will be happening with our precious McClure Children. Children will be taken directly to the multipurpose room for Rainbow Village with Eden (11am only). They will stay in the multipurpose room until

worship is over when parents retrieve them. We will ask parents to leave their cell # with Eden so she can easily reach you if there is an issue or if your child misses you and needs a hug. Our fabulous Junior youth will head straight to the junior youth room and will also remain there until the end of worship. Our stupendous Senior youth will worship from the upper balcony for the first 15 minutes and then begin their program in the senior youth lounge. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Laura or myself. Now don't worry if you didn't catch it all of that because it was also sent in an email and will be posted on our website as well.

If you have any questions or concerns that you would like to talk about, we are here for you. We are in this together and want to do our best to support and encourage each other as we move forward. So give us a call, send an email or stop by the office. And, may I also ask that you please be patient with us as we try and test how to move forward. We've never done this before and, while we feel like we have a solid plan... Well, these past 20 months have taught us that we need to be flexible.

In other news:

Laura is putting together "at home Advent Kits for families again this year. If you would like to receive a kit, please let Laura know as soon as possible. They will be delivered later this week.

I'm putting together Advent Devotional kits for adults and they can be picked up from the church office beginning Wednesday November 24<sup>th</sup>, and from the entry area near the office again Sunday November 28 until 12:30.

We are also having a Blue Christmas service for all of us who find the Christmas season a difficult season to navigate because of loss of a loved one or due to other challenges. We will worship together in the building n December 5 at 7pm – Please call the office to register to attend this worship.

There are other announcements as well so please have a good look at the email, the Facebook page or our website. All the details you need can be found in those places. And the newsletter will be out at the end of next week so that will have loads of information to check out.

And one last thing before we move into worship – I want to offer up a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to the production of these worship recordings. There were teachers and tech people, editors and designers. God bless our musicians and readers. Thank you to Andrew, Lindsay, and Laura for your care in producing these important recordings that have kept us connected to each other and to our spiritual practise of worship.

Let us now move into worship... as we light our Christ Candle.

### **Candle Lighting**

And now I invite you to take a moment to breathe deeply of God's love – a love the is with us wherever we are... whatever we do. A love we know through the stories, the teachings, and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

And I light this candle this morning... the Christ candle... on Reign of Christ Sunday as a reminder of the light of Christ shining in us, through us and all around us... lighting the way with his power... his strength... and his wisdom.

**Call to Worship:** Let us Build a House offered by Elin Sletmoen

### **Opening Prayer**

Loving and life-giving God, on this last Sunday of the Christian year, we are gathering in your presence, seeking the life you offer - . Make our hearts ready, God, to receive your son, Jesus... to commit ourselves to follow in his footsteps – living with compassion, seeking justice and trusting in your goodness. May our time together during this time of worship help us be prepared to meet Jesus the Christ and to be open to go wherever he may lead us. And we pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### **Hymn**

**Scripture:** Mark 14:26-31, 66-72 read by Ruth Mireau

<sup>26</sup>When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. <sup>27</sup>And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written,

‘I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered.’

<sup>28</sup>But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” <sup>29</sup>Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” <sup>30</sup>Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” <sup>31</sup>But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

<sup>66</sup>While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup>When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, “You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.” <sup>68</sup>But he denied it, saying, “I do not know or understand what you are talking about.” And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. <sup>69</sup>And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” <sup>70</sup>But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.” <sup>71</sup>But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know this man you are talking about.” <sup>72</sup>At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

### **Reflection**

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

I am so excited – next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent and we will be worshipping in our beloved building – I can hardly wait.

I can hardly wait for all the awkward greetings. Wanting to hug but not hugging – maybe air hugging instead or trying a elbow or fist bump or perhaps the royal wave. Then there will be the frantic look for a name tag as sort through our covid brains for the right name to go with the friendly eyes in front of us.

There will be those searching through purses or pockets - looking for their proof of vaccine stuff and uncomfortable ushers having to check the information when they would rather just trust you - but both of you smile knowing you are doing what needs to be done- knowing this is the best practise to keep everyone safe.

Then there will be the “were do I sit” dilemma; shall I sit in the same old place, or do I switch it up? Then once you land there will be the check of the perimeter and wondering if you are feeling comfortable being in that spot – am I too close to someone else? Should I move to feel a bit more comfortable but if I get up move will worry that others will think I am being ridiculously cautious. Then there will be those of us who will just sit down and start to cry because we are home – and being home will feel so very good.

There will be those at home who will be watching and wishing they could be with us but who need to make different choices right now. We will be missing each other.

But, before we get to Advent 1 we need to get through this Sunday. Traditionally known as Christ the King Sunday. The last Sunday in the church year. The Sunday we often hear the story of Jesus movement toward the cross. The story of the Passover meal, Jesus praying in the garden, the arrest, the awkward and unjust trial, the body pierced and the last breath.

It seems a rather bleak end to the church year. However, it makes sense for if we are going to journey toward the manger again we need to be reminded that the baby we welcome is not an ordinary baby – the baby King – is not the King the world thinks he is but rather the kind of King the world needs. A king of justice and radical love and healing. This is important to remember as we move toward the manger.

Woven in a thought the last days of Jesus life is the story of Peter.

I love Peter. I love the Peter who jumps into the deep end and sinking like a rock. The Peter who is convinced he can stay awake in the garden but who instead falls asleep. The Peter, who Passionately pledges to be with Jesus even if it means death but who has a huge lapse in memory, when the night falls, and who cannot even remember that he is one of Jesus followers.

I feel for Peter for here he is - called by this Jesus fellow to follow him, and the following has been pretty amazing. Peter has heard and seen things that he never dreamed he would. He has witnessed healings and heard sermons and seen thousands fed. He has watched as Jesus reduced the authorities to dust with arguments dripping in holy wisdom. He has witnessed Jesus’ popularity rise and the hopes of the people growing and now there is the expectation the first time that Jesus might be the one to lead the people away from the oppressive glare of the Roman authority and now might be a new time of justice for all. It has been a rather sweet ride.

To promise to follow when times are good is an easy promise to make.

But this night – this night of Jesus arrest and trial is different. The religious authorities were scared and angry, the political authorities were scared and angry, the economic authorities were scared and angry – all were bound and determined to do something about Jesus. This was a treacherous night. A confusing night Jesus was not going to walk away from this.

It was into this night that Peter found himself. Alone and confused, challenged to answer questions of who he was. Questions he failed miserably to answer.

I've had nights like Peter. Nights that feel drained of light. Nights of confusion and loneliness. Life has served up challenges that seems too large for my abilities to deal with them. I have lost who I am and to whom I belong. I have made mistakes. I have wept bitter tears. Tears over shattered relationships, hurts inflicted, opportunities for forgiveness missed, promises broken. I have had nights like Peter – perhaps you have too?

It is easy to follow and make promises when the ride is sweet but when the road is hard – to continue to follow and to keep our promises well that is the challenge.

We know, so the Biblical story tell us, that Peter's story does not end in a puddle of tears by the fire.

Rather Peter's story begins once again when he meets the Risen Jesus, the Christ and sees for himself the power of love to transform death into life. It is when Peter understands that in his doubt and denial that God has not abandoned him but rather walked through the same muck of despair, and doubt and come through to something new and powerful - that is when Peter's life begins anew and he becomes the rock Jesus knew him to be.

I would hunch Peter comes to at least two new understandings as he turns toward the Christ. The first is that the life of a disciples is not always easy. Some time we will be asked for much more then we are willing to give. The road will be uncomfortable even dangerous but the road will leave to abundant life.

And second, I think Peter comes to understand that we are not defined forever by our mistakes or our broken promises rather we are defined by a God power that will not let us go and believes we too are the rock upon which others can find their strength and way.

So on this last Sunday of the Church year let us turn toward our Christ to see the promise of God's love for us. And let us move toward the birth of our servant king with renewed humility and hope.

Amen

## **Hymn**

### **Prayers of the People**

O God, through Jesus the Christ,  
you proclaimed your kingdom among us and within us.  
In the power of the Spirit, your love is always at work,  
bringing good out of evil and life out of death.  
We thank you that your love never lets us go,  
for you have known the good times and the hard times of this life before us.  
You came as one who was hungry and thirsty.  
Where people live on the streets today, suffer from hunger, or beg for a meal:  
May your kingdom come. May your will be done.

You came as a stranger in need of welcome.

Where people live lonely lives or feel like strangers in a strange land; where love is lacking and people face rejection because of who they are, where they're from, what they look like or what they are able or not able to do:

May your kingdom come. May your will be done.

You came as one who was naked.

Where people lack enough clothing, shelter or life's basic resources; where people live without dignity, exposed to every kind of pain and hardship:

May your kingdom come. May your will be done.

You came as one who was broken.

Where people feel pain in body, mind or spirit; where someone grieves the loss of a beloved or the future they planned; in places where the pandemic has done its worst and desperation has moved in:

May your kingdom come. May your will be done.

You came as a Shepherd.

Where people are led astray or nations are ruled by corrupt or greedy leaders and there is no peace in the land:

May your kingdom come. May your will be done.

You came as one who was in prison.

Where people are treated unfairly, targeted or tortured; where justice has failed and people are punished with cruelty:

May your kingdom come. May your will be done.

You came as one, called Jesus, proclaiming your kingdom.

And so we lift up these prayers his name, knowing that your kingdom is drawing near and that we meet you in the face of those who cry out to us.

And we cry out to you now... holding all your people in our hearts as we say together the words that Jesus taught his friends and his followers...

## **Benediction**

Go into the world to love and to serve.

May the God of compassion give us strength for the journey;

may the spirit of wisdom give us vision for the road;

and may the love of Christ make us caring companions,

as we travel together,

this day and evermore.

**Sung Blessing:** May the God of Hope offered by Jim Gillis