

October 3, 2021
Creation Week 4 “Here I Am, Lord”

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God with McClure United Church today. No matter who you are... where you are... or when you are sharing in this time of worship...we are blessed to have you with us. I know there are some folks watching this together live on Youtube. I hope you will all be able to figure out the chat box. We have a couple of greeters there to welcome you. Please feel free to check in and chat throughout the service and, of course, if you'd just like to watch and listen.. that's okay too.. If you have no idea what I'm talking about... that's ok. I often don't either.

Last week, even though we weren't able to have folks in person to worship together on the livestream, we decided to go ahead and livestream our usual recorded service so those who wanted could all watch it together at 10am on Sunday. 48 joined in last week's livestream and I hope even more find their way here this week.

If you're thinking... gee that sounds kind of cool.. but don't know how to get there. Please feel free to send me a message or give me a call and I'm more than happy to walk you through it. Its one way we can continue to connect as community under these less than ideal circumstances.

So for announcements..

Today is worldwide communion Sunday and we decided to have a special time to honour this day of interdenominational connection through communion with a special service. So you are invited to join Debra and I this evening at 7pm to celebrate communion together. The Zoom link for this gathering is on the website, facebook page and was in the email you should have received this morning. Please bring with you some bread and juice and an item from faraway. Perhaps you have a souvenir from a vacation, or a little something you purchased at Ten Thousand Villages, maybe you have a travel book from another part of the world, or a postcard from a friend please bring that item with you to the service. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom, please try to join a little early and then you can phone or text me at 306-291-5838 if you are having any troubles and I will help you.

And Debra is starting a new group called “Devotions and Discussion” on Wednesday, October 6th at 7pm.. This will be a time for folks to check in, hear scripture, discuss and pray together. Everyone is welcome – the link to this online gathering is also on the website, Facebook and was in the email today. You can also call the church office for more information.

There are lots of other things going on in the church... book club, Bible study, weekly coffee time... all of these are posted in previously mentioned places and I do hope you'll take a moment to check them out.

And that's all I have for you today... so let's move now into our time of worship.

Call to Worship

Friends, the Bible tells us we are made in the image of the creator, every one of us carries within us the capacity to be a deeply spiritual person, to be creative, to be visionary, and to be an agent for positive change. It is our responsibility to say "here I am, send me" and to cultivate our capacity to benefit the earth and all its creatures. Today we ask; what are we creating in this world that will cause positive ripples into the future? We light this Christ candle trusting that as we offer what we have to the world we do so surround by the love of God and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn: "Come All You People" Celeste Delahey and Tamara Ferguson

Opening Prayer

God for those of us who like to live in the background to say "here I am, send me" is beyond scary. Calm our fears and challenge us. For those of us who are "out there" all the time, beyond busy and always seen, to say "here I am, send me" is a humbling reset. Forgive our bluster and centre our busy. Open our hearts in this time of worship that we might truly hear your call and respond in faithful action. Amen.

Hymn: "I the Lord of Sea and Sky" Tom Powell, Adam Brookman & Jennifer Brookman

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8 offered by Naomi Yuen

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Master sitting on a throne—high, exalted!—and the train of his robes filled the Temple. Angel-seraphs hovered above him, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two their feet, and with two they flew. And they called back and forth one to the other,

Holy, Holy, Holy is GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies.
His bright glory fills the whole earth.

The foundations trembled at the sound of the angel voices, and then the whole house filled with smoke. I said,

“Doom! It’s Doomsday!
I’m as good as dead!
Every word I’ve ever spoken is tainted—
blasphemous even!
And the people I live with talk the same way,
using words that corrupt and desecrate.
And here I’ve looked God in the face!
The King! GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies!”

Then one of the angel-seraphs flew to me. He held a live coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with the coal and said,

“Look. This coal has touched your lips.
Gone your guilt,
your sins wiped out.”
And then I heard the voice of the Master:
“Whom shall I send?
Who will go for us?”
I spoke up,
“I’ll go.
Send me!”

Reflection offered by Rev. Laura Fohse

And the voice of God said, “whom shall I send... who will go for us?”
Isaiah responded, “Here am I; send me”.

Well, I heard the voice of God say, “whom shall I send.. who will go for us?”
And I responded, “oh geez.. I’m so tired... and busy... and stressed out... and I don’t really know what to do... I’m not sure I could be any help at all. I think you better find someone else.”
And God said, “but I want you. You are a prophet. You are the one I am calling”.
And I laughed and laughed and laughed.
AND God waited.

What was up with this Isaiah guy?
Was he just sitting around waiting for something to do?
Look, he mustn’t have been living with the same kind of busyness and chaos...
with the same kind of uncertainty and self-doubt that many of us live with today.

Those must have been easier times... they must have been for him to be able to just jump right in and say...
"I'll do it... send me".

So... ya.. this is not exactly the case.

The first 5 chapters of Isaiah tell us all about the problems of the Judeans. They'd forgotten about God, their leadership was corrupt, injustice was everywhere and the long-serving king... the one who had brought some stability to the picture... had just died...

There was a very good chance their nation was going to be attacked and probably conquered by a foreign enemy.

I didn't read anything about a pandemic though so I guess it wasn't quite so bad.

But what about Isaiah... obviously he was more Godly than us, right?

Wiser... a more spiritually gifted person than any of us ...

I mean, he WAS a prophet.

He seemed pretty confident in his willingness to be the one who answered the call...

Except there was all that stuff before he said "here I am".

It seems like Isaiah kind of became unglued a bit when he heard the angels praising God...

shouting about it being doomsday and laying out his fear and inadequacies... his deep feelings of unworthiness.

So... I guess maybe our response to God's call should not be dependent on the circumstances we find ourselves in...

our busyness or stress load or uncertainty about the future.

And our response to God's call also really shouldn't be dependent on our feelings of worthiness... on our own sense of ability to do the task.

I hear that... and I believe that... and yet it can still, at times, feel incredibly difficult to accept... or even hear... God's call.

This week's theme in our series serves as a reminder that we were made in the image of the Creator...

and every single one of us has the capacity to be prophets.. visionaries... mystics..

We all carry within us the ability to be agents... to be disciples... for positive change.

And this week's lesson from Isaiah is a reminder of our call to cultivate and to use those abilities...

We need to cultivate our capacity as co-creators...

that's what we are - co-creators –

creation did not end with us...

As we were created, we also became co-creators with our Creator.

And we get to choose how we create....

Do we create in a way that causes positive ripples into the future... or in a way that causes negative ripples – or maybe even no ripples at all.

So what, exactly, are we being sent to do?

The Christian scriptures tell us that we are to live one very important commandment.

We are commanded to love God with all our hearts and minds and bodies and spirits... and we are commanded to love our neighbours as ourselves.

These are the basics... this is how we live out the love of Jesus.

So what does that look like in our individual lives?

Each of us is called to use our different gifts... abilities... talents...to bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

We are called to be agents of change... to be part of the body of Christ in an active way..

co-creating...

caring for all of God's creation and holding in front of us the peaceable vision of creation found in a later verse in Isaiah.. "the wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat; the calf and young lion will be together and a little child will lead them".

Jesus too held the vision of a peace... and modelled a way to live in harmony with each other – challenging those in places and positions of power to be compassionate and just...

and lifting up... caring for those who had no power at all.

As far as I can tell, Jesus entire ministry was about sharing this kind of love.

So many of his teachings held wisdom about how to be in relationship with THIS world.. here and now... about how we are all deeply connected to God and to all of God's creation...

Co-creating.

a concept that is central to creation spirituality.. a spirituality based in relationship... in the belief that we and all of creation are intrinsically connected.. And a spirituality that believes in the power of mysticism.

I've always thought of a mystic as someone with special powers... someone out of this world... above and beyond us regular folks.

But I am beginning to understand that we are all called to be mystics.

Wait, what?

First prophets and now mystics?

Well according to creation spirituality, being a mystic means that you have the capacity to pray, to meditate and to live from a place of awe and wonder... in other words, that capacity to be in the presence of God.

Being present with God doesn't mean figuring it all out.. having all the answers.. understanding the way things work and how they need to be fixed.

Being present with God means living in... and appreciating the mystery that is all around us and within us.

Albert Einstein... the greatest scientist of his time said, "Life is a mystery, not a problem waiting to be solved".

From this awe-filled place of mystery, we are in the best place to co-create.

Our souls need to create.

Energy and life comes from creativity.

And if you are thinking right now "but I'm not creative"... just stop.

You are.

We all are.

Have you ever planted a flower? Hammered a nail? Coloured a picture? Solved a problem? Found a way to help a friend?

If you are breathing.. you can create.

We are mystics – with the capacity to create.

We are prophets – with the capacity to change the world.

Even though we might be tired and stressed and overwhelmed and afraid...
even though we may feel unworthy or incapable...
We have the capacity to create.
We have the capacity to change the world.

Several years ago one of the kids from McClure came to my office before church and asked if she could speak with me for a moment.

I invited her in.

She took a seat and, with a very serious face, informed me that she was going to be a prophet when she grew up.

Pretty sure she was using the wrong word... (I was thinking she meant disciple)... I asked her what she would do as a prophet.

She told me she was going to make the world better.

She attended catholic school and had been learning about prophets... and just decided that this sound like a pretty good job to have.

Matthew Fox... the episcopal priest I referred to last time I shared... says that a prophet is someone who interferes with injustice.

Similarly, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, who was a professor of Jewish mysticism... said that we are all called to interfere with what interrupts authentic life.

We are all called to interfere with what interrupts authentic life.

Authentic life is happening when we are caring for one another... when we are working to create peace and harmony

And we are following God's call... living Christ's love... co-creating God's kingdom...

we are being a prophet whenever we confront injustice... whenever we help others see how their behaviour is harming any part of creation.

Anyone can do this.

We don't need to think in terms of big acts of interference... in fact, I don't think that's a good place to start...

think small gestures... gestures of kindness.. of compassion.

And that's the best kind of energy to motivate our prophetic acts – the energy of love and a desire for peace and harmony.

And please remember... we are not individual prophets facing the world's injustices alone.

All of us have a role to play.

None of us are too old, too young or too anything to be an agent for positive change.

Even the most humble part of the body of Christ have something valuable to offer.

When I am feeling like I don't have a lot to offer... God calls me to get over myself and to just do one kind thing... even just one

So often I experience God as loving and compassionate and full of grace and patience –

sometimes I experience God as a cheerleader... encouraging me on...

and sometimes I experience God as a relentless... and even annoying.. reminder of my worth and ability – holding me accountable to share the gifts I have been given.

And.. I want to make a difference in the world.

I want all of us to want to make a difference in the world.

I mean just by living we are making a difference...

but I don't want to just live...

I want to be alive – with passion and joy .. with love

I have no doubt in our ability... we are God's creation and God continues to work in and through us.

I think what we need is to be bold... and courageous and to not allow ourselves to listen to the voices that tell us we are too... (fill in the blank)

Let's reach into our mystic spirits.... ground ourselves in the mystery of God's creation with awe and wonder...

Let's pull out our prophetic insight and voice... preparing ourselves to interfere with anything that interrupts the authentic life.

Let's reach out to our community of co-creators... we are created to live in relationship and we need this to live in wholeness as individuals.

Here we will find the energy, persistence and courage we need to grow God's peaceable kingdom... right here where we are.

We need this...

All of us...

we don't get off the hook by thinking we don't... or we can't.

We have been given this incredible gift of a God inspired life... why would we not unwrap it... why would we leave it on a shelf... collecting dust.

How can we say anything other than "here I am... send me"?

Its not easy... I know that.

to say yes when every part of us is screaming "are you kidding me?"
is incredibly hard

but truly... the consequences of not saying yes... are harder

For me anyway, not actively saying yes inevitably leads to a significant diminishing of that sense of awe and wonder...

it leads to complacency in my desire for a world of peace and justice...

it leads to my internal spirit feeling heavy.... weighted down.

It leads to the feeling of a lack of purpose and meaning –
my purpose becomes about just getting through the day.

That is not how I want to live.

I'm not for a second saying that offering my life to God means things instantly become sunshine and roses.

I'm sure you've read what happened to biblical prophets.. and I'm sure you've heard what happened to some modern day prophets... Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, Gandhi.

To interfere with injustice is not a popular thing to do.

The world doesn't need popular.

The world needs folks committed to peace, justice, kindness, compassion...
and love.

And even the smallest of kindnesses will create a positive ripple into the future.

So if we don't feel like doing it for today... let's do it for tomorrow!

May it be so.

Hymn: "Go Make a Difference" Sacred Sounds

Offering Dedication:

Traditionally, this has been the time in our worship service when we pass the offering plates. This ritual is not just about the collection of money. It is also an opportunity to reflect on our role in the ministry of McClure United Church and on how we live our lives as followers of Christ. So I'd like to invite us all to just pause now as we see some images move across our screens. These are a visual sign of our ongoing ministry. As you are watching, perhaps you'd like to reflect on where God is calling you to share your gifts at this time in your life. Of course financial gifts continue to be necessary in order to do the ministry we are called to do... the gift of you – your passions, your talents, your time, however, are also necessary. What desire might God be stirring up in you? What might God be calling you... or nudging you... to do that will feed your soul and serve the ministry that we have been called to share?

At the end of the service will be information about how to make a financial contribution... if you are able, please consider sharing in this way.

And, if you are feeling a pull to share your love in another way... please be in touch with Debra or myself and we can help you discern what that might be.

For months now you have continued your stewardship of this faith community as we found our way online. Covid may have kept us from being in the church building, but it has not kept us from being the church. So many of you have donated your time, helping us to discern and make decisions about keeping one another safe... the church board and many of the committees have continued to meet on Zoom... you've shown up for discussion groups and Bible studies... we've continued and you've continued to be a church that cares about and connects with the wider community through various outreach projects. You have also continued to support the ministries of this church financially. Thank you! Your gifts, whatever they may be, are a blessing!

And so we begin our time of prayer now with a dedication of all the offerings that have been freely given and gratefully received.

Creative God, we know that our gifts make a difference to each other and to others in your world. We give to support the ministry of this congregation. We give to support your ministry of love in the world. We

give so that others might live with hope. Receive and bless our gifts and with them the offerings of our hearts. We ask these things as followers of Jesus. Amen.

Prayers of the People

As we enter into a time of prayer I invite you to make a fist with your hands and imagine in those clenched fists is all that you are holding tight: fear, anxiety, worry, grief, loneliness, helplessness or maybe you are holding onto a specific circumstance that has you tied in knots. You are invited now to slowly open your fists and imagine letting go, into the loving embrace of the spirit -who transforms all things – and as we let go and

open up we see that now our hands and our hearts are more ready to hold with love the concerns of others and the pain of the world and so we would pray:

Hear the worries that haunt us: for your creation in danger and the part we play in that. For the air that is made dangerous to breathe, for the water that becomes unfit to drink, for soil that is blown away or mined into lifelessness, for all these things and for the task of care you call us to we offer our prayers of concern.

Hear our prayers as we linger in the learnings of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We pray for Indigenous peoples and for Settlers - that you might weave your love and healing amongst us. That we might find new ways of being your people in new and healthy ways that speak to deep care and respect for each other. The road forward is not easy, but it is a road of possibilities and new life for both your people and your creation. May we walk with gentleness, strength, and truth.

Hear our prayers for our health care system and those who work within it - those pushed to the brink. We hold in love health care workers whose hearts have broken under the weight of their desire to care for others - may they find healing. We hold in love and pray for those health care workers who have been pushed to an edge but who continue on - we ask for strength.

Hear our prayers for those who still struggle with the decision to become vaccinated. In a world God, where truth is sometimes hard to find grant clarity.

Hear our prayers for our loved ones, who share our life, for those who care for us and for the ones who need our care. We pray for those that bring joy to us and for the love they call forth from us, for the goodness we know in relationships. We pray for healing of those who are sick and comfort for those who grieve, companionship for those who are lonely and energy for those who are tired.

We pause now in silence so that we might open our hearts to you
with the prayers that are too deep for words.....

Hear our prayers of gratitude for the wonders of the world around us;
for the early morning chorus of geese, for the plump grain in the bin, for the
cool crisp air, for all these things and for the breath of life that we share
with people around the world. For the opportunity to open our hearts in
prayer we give you thanks and praise.

Hear us now as we offer the prayer that Jesus, our teacher and guide
taught us as Shirley sings the words for us: Our Father...

Amen

Benediction

WE have all been given amazing, created and holy gifts

And we have all been called to share them.

So may we all remember to take time to fill ourselves up with God's presence...

with the mystery.. awe and wonder that is all around us

And from that spirit-filled place, may we commit ourselves each day to live God's
peaceable kingdom into being.

And remember always that we do nothing alone.

We are a community of co-creators...

Together, with God's boldness and courage, we can do what we've been called
to do.

So go in love..

To be love.

The world needs us.

Hymn: "You Shall Go Out with Joy" Jim Gillis