

Worship for February 20, 2022

Prelude

Acknowledgment Video

A 1 minute video acknowledging the land and that we are affirming ministries.

Welcome *(Keith)*

Good morning and a warm welcome to our second week of joint worship between McClure and St. Martin's. I am Keith Hall, one of the ministry team from St. Martin's and we are pleased to once again be acting as a test hub as McClure moves toward joining with their new partners from Carlyle and Radville United Churches as well as Abbey-Lancer Pastoral Charge for Sunday morning worship by satellite. This will begin on Sunday March 6th. We have enjoyed the opportunity to work together and thank folks at McClure for assisting us as Jordan continues her medical leave.

There were a few minor tech issues last week that have been sorted out. We are all working to provide you with a good worship experience. We know we share this time with a loving and forgiving community and so if something goes amiss, please stay with us and we will do our best to fix it. If you lose us all together the service is being recorded and you will be able to access it later in the day on McClure's YouTube channel. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

Neither of our congregations currently have in person worship so its just me and our tech team Cathy Anderson and Ken Glover here at St. Martin's. Debra and Laura are at McClure, along with music leaders Shirley & Elin and their amazing tech support people. Beth Williamson from St. Martin's is reading scripture and Tracy Murton is the St. Martin's online host, she will be joined by Terry Cutler on YouTube and Natasha Burlingette will be the host on Facebook. Sincere thanks to all who are participating in worship leadership this morning.

I will begin with a few announcements for St. Martin's folks and then we will switch to McClure for their announcements.

My ministry colleague Jordan Cantwell remains on medical leave. We continue to offer her sincere blessings and many prayers for good improvements this week.

We are pleased to announce that In-Person Worship will be resuming for the season of Lent. Our first service will be Ash Wednesday, March 2nd. The health and wellbeing of our congregation has been paramount in the decision making around the services that we offer. As such, we will be returning with the same protocols that were in place when we suspended worship in early January. You will find all the details in this week's church

chat and messenger. Please remember to call or email Brandy if you wish to attend worship as pre-registration is still required.

McClure Announcements *(Laura)*

And we are also returning to in person worship. Yay!!

We are back for Ash Wednesday... that's this coming Wednesday at 7pm and then will resume our two worship services at 9:15 and 11 next Sunday.

You no longer need to pre-register but we are still going to require that everyone is masked at all times and we are strongly recommending that folks be fully vaccinated to attend in person.

If you come to the 9:15 service, it will be just as you remember, with a few little changes to minimize direct contact with each other.

But if you join us at 11, you will experience Rural Connect as we join together with Radville and Carlyle United Churches for worship. The service itself will be identical to the 9:15 service but we will be connected by satellite with our partners and they will be sharing leadership with us.

That service.. at 11.. will also be livestreamed for those not yet ready to return and for those who live away. That service will also be available on YouTube and Facebook once the live service is finished.

Children and youth programming will also resume in person at 11. Children will go directly to the multipurpose room where Eden will be eagerly waiting for them.

And we hope that everyone will join us for our congregational meeting today at 1pm to talk about budgety stuff. All of the info you need for the meeting is on our website, including the Facebook link. I'll share the most exciting announcement first... its budget talk time!!

And finally... our Lenten Book study begins on Wednesday, March 9. We are offering this both in person and on Zoom... and we are asking folks to pre-register. If you'd like to join but didn't get a copy of the hard copy... you can still purchase a digital version on the United Church Bookstore website.

Gathering Song: Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying *(Shirley and Kristie)*

Candle Lighting/Call to Worship *(Words – Debra; Candle lighting on camera at both)*

The light of Christ shines on us and in us.

The light of Christ leads us.

The light of Christ transforms us.

We light this candle in the certainty that Christ's presence is here with us today. *(Candle)*

Jesus went to the mountain and was changed. Transformed.

God calls us to change our lives.

God calls us to change our hearts.

God calls us to change our thinking.

But change is hard for us.

May God open our lives, our hearts, our thinking, as we worship this day.

May we be transformed by God's loving presence.

Opening Prayer (*Debra – behind the communion table*)

God of dazzling light. Visit each of us with your amazing grace, your mindfulness, your peace. We want to be on the mountaintop with you, a time of perfect awareness of your goodness, a time of sacred communion with all life. We want to know we are loved and to know how to love. We want the light, the cloud of joy, and voice of reassurance. Shine upon us, shine with in us so that we might worship and know. Amen.

Hymn: How Good God to Be Here (VU 103, vs 1-3) (*Shirley and Kristie*)

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36 Read by Beth Williamson

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus^[a] took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰ Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,^[b] they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,^[c] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not knowing what he said. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen;^[d] listen to him!" ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

This is testimony from our ancestors in faith.

Thanks be to God.

Reflection (*Laura*)

In the land of Israel and Palestine, churches have been built on holy sites to commemorate significant moments in the life of Jesus.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem marks the place where Jesus was born. In Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre encompasses both the hill where Jesus was crucified, and the location of the tomb in which his body was laid.

The Church of the Multiplication sits atop the hill where it is believed Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and the fishes.

And ironically, the Church of the Transfiguration graces the top of Mount Tabor, marking the location where Peter, James and John saw Jesus miraculously transfigured and talking with the ancient Hebrew prophets, Moses and Elijah.

I find this ironic because building shrines to contain and preserve that holy moment was precisely what Peter originally suggested the disciples do... yet the gospel writers take great pains to explain that Peter was clearly not thinking straight when he suggested this.

It is a very human thing, isn't it, to want to enshrine – to pin down and hold onto – those moments when we feel close to the divine presence... when the ordinary and messiness of life seem to burn away and we are caught up in the luminous presence of something bigger than ourselves.

A few years ago I visited the Qu'Appelle House of Prayer for the first time. Located in the beautiful qu'appelle valley, the house of prayer is a little silent retreat centre. The facility is simple and yet magnificent. Two sides of the chapel, which is up on one of the hilltops, are fully windowed. As you sit, looking at the cross on the altar, you see in the background the hills and valleys and the lake. And up on one of the hills is a huge wooden cross.

The first time I attended prayers, I was overwhelmed with a sense of the sacred. I could feel God's love wrap around me and peace move through my body. The prayer service itself was lovely but I continued to sit long past when the service had ended and just looked. I sat there for what seemed like hours, the sun shining in through the windows as I just was.

Its hard for me to describe that experience... I only know in that moment I felt more connected to the divine and to all creation than I had in what felt like a very long time.

It was a holy moment, a sacred encounter.

And even as I share this story now, I can feel it in my body.

I remember thinking at the time just wishing I never had to leave. I wanted to hold that feeling forever. But, of course, there was life to be lived, things to do... I couldn't stay.

just as the disciples and Jesus couldn't stay at the top of the mountain forever ... they needed to come back down, to return to the messy reality of life on the ground.

I have returned to House of Prayer many times and each time is a grounding experience... a reconnection with God, with creation and with myself. But, I don't need to return to that physical space to reconnect with that sensation. I can return there in my mind as

often as I need... and I do... especially when I need assurance of God's presence... especially when I feel disconnected from the truth that first time revealed.

I suspect most of us have had a "mountaintop experience" at one time or another... a moment when our perception of reality shifts, if only briefly, and we can see the truth of our connectedness... the beauty and goodness of God revealed right in front of us.

Perhaps it was a look of love that passed between you and another person...

The dazzling sunlight illuminating hoar frost-covered trees...

The first time you held a new-born baby in your arms...

Or the breathtaking experience of standing out on the Canadian prairie where both land and sky are infinite...

I invite you to take a moment now to go back there in your mind... to allow the wonder of that holy moment to fill you again....

Time of silence

We can not stay on the mountaintop or perched out over the lake forever.

These glimpses of holy truth are fleeting... but they can become a touchstone for us... a place, a memory we can return to for strength and assurance when the troubles of life threaten to overwhelm us and create the illusion that God is far away.

The gospel writers tell us that Peter, James and John didn't speak of their experience on the mountaintop with Jesus until much later.

It was only after his crucifixion and resurrection, when the disciples were facing the reality of what all of this would mean for them and how they might respond, that Peter, James and John recalled that experience of seeing Jesus transfigured... of knowing themselves to be in the presence of the holy... of hearing God's voice speak to them, inviting them to listen and to follow.

When they were at their most lost and frightened, the disciples leaned into that mountaintop experience and from it they drew the courage and the faith they needed to face the challenges that were before them.

Those holy moments, when we experience a tangible and indisputable connection with divine love, are meant not just to assure us, but also to strengthen us and to give us the courage to live with faith, hope and love, in the everyday moments of life.

When we allow those mountaintop experiences to become for us a touchstone, reconnecting us to the truth of God's presence and love in our lives and in the world,

then they have the power to transfigure us... to allow God's luminous presence to be revealed through us.

The assurance that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves and this moment gives us strength to be people of peace and compassion in a world hell-bent on war.

The revelation of God's all-embracing love empowers us to refuse to be enemies – even with those who wish us harm.

The certainty that this beautiful, aching world is infused with divine presence makes us bold in our solidarity with the land, waters, air, and creatures who share this sacred home with us.

And the knowledge that God is as close as our breath allows us to live with hope, even in these perilous times.

As we contemplate the mystery of the Transfiguration, may we sink into the assurance of God's love and presence that God has planted in our life, and may we draw strength from it to meet the challenges of this moment with faith, hope and love.

Amen.

Hymn: Jesus On the Mountain Peak *(Shirley and Kristie)*

Acknowledgment of Offering *(Keith words; camera at both behind communion table)*

Life is a blessing from the Creator. With all creation, we reflect God's image, and share God's blessings with humility and gratitude. Let us offer our talents, our skills, and our very being as an expression of our thanks and our commitment to live God's love in the world. May God bless all that we offer and multiply it to meet the needs of the world.

Prayer of Dedication

Let us pray...

God, in the confidence of our faith, we know that we do not have to earn your love and care. It is ours by grace. This makes our offering a gesture of thanksgiving for all the ways in which we are blessed. In thanks and praise, we offer ourselves and our gifts for your service. Amen

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Sung Offertory: All That We Have *(Shirley and Kristie)*

Prayers of the People *(Debra)*

God Help us to see - Your beauty in creation. There are few places in the world where your people are so in-tune with the weather and the rhythms of the earth than here on the prairie. Our farmers watch the amount of snow that falls so that they might predict if

there will be enough moisture in the soil to plant in the spring. Our children watch the wind-chill forecast for it determines if they will play outside or will they have to stay indoors for recess. Travelers watch the news for advice about road conditions or flight delays. We watch with awe and respect the snow swirling around us, dancing to a beat unknown. Teach us not only to watch the wonders of your creation but also to see how we affect creations fragile beauty. Teach us to see ourselves sharing your one breath. God Help us to see Your peace, in the world. When we watch the news we see Russian troops advancing in Ukraine. We see female children kidnapped in Nigeria. We see millions displaced. Peace is hard to see and yet we do catch glimpses. We see your peace when Treaty rights are respected, children are being cherished and immigrants welcomed. Keep us feeling the pain and outrage we feel when we see war and hate, and move us to see ourselves as your people, your people called to gentleness, justice making and reconciliation.

God Help us to see. Your love, in our relationships. Sometimes we see more clearly the hurt and pain of the world than we see the hurt and pain we cause those closest to us. We look in a loved one's eyes and miss their longing for a gentle touch, a kind word or a gesture of appreciation. Open our eyes to the needs of those closest to us. Open our hearts in love.

God We ask that you might see into our lives and heal what is in need of healing and transform that which needs to be transformed. We pray now in silence for ourselves, for friends and for family.....

Help us to see – in the life, of your gift Jesus – new ways of caring for creation, serving our neighbor and loving those closest to us.

We pray in the name of Jesus and Pray using the words he taught...

Our Father/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

Hymn: Many Are the Lightbeams (VU 588, vs 1-3) (Shirley and Kristie)

Benediction (*Keith*)

In Uganda there is a saying:

One who experiences something good must share it.

We who have received, felt and experienced
the good news must share it.

Go, then, into the world

to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ

in your words, actions, and deeds.

May the blessing of God – Creator, Christ, and Holy Wisdom –
be upon you and remain with you, this day and forever more. Amen

Sung Blessing: Take Up His Song (*Shirley and Elin*)