

McClure United Church
Anniversary Sunday
October 31, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

A very warm welcome to each and everyone.

Today McClure United Church is celebrating our 55 Anniversary.

We give God thanks for God's constant companionship along our way. We believe that we have done our best to be the people God has called us to be. We have not always got it right and we ask forgiveness for those times we have stumbled and hurt others.

We are grateful for all our wonderful saints of the past who have loved our church into being. For those with the courage to lay the foundation of not only a faith community but a building that houses all kinds of ministry we give thanks.

For all those who continue to love this church and its ministry with their time, talent and treasury we give thanks. We ask God to expand our welcome, deepen our spiritual practises and grow our passion and work for justice.

We are excited to announce that we are moving to begin in person worship on Sunday mornings – there will be more information about this next week. We are carefully planning our re-entry into the building and ask for your prayers as we do so. But perhaps you should start practising – maybe next week instead of watching the worship recording in your PJs try putting on a t shirt and jeans – next week add some shoes. This way when we are back to in building worship it will be less of a shock.

Only a few announcements today – If you are watching this on October 31 then you know that it is Halloween and Laura and I are inviting all children and their grownups for a special treat – come between 3 and 4:30 and we will have a yummy surprise for you.

Just a reminder that weekly Bible study Wednesday afternoons is on going and the Book email group is still chatting – please check the website and Facebook page for details – it is never too late to get involved with these groups.

“Bee the Church” honey fundraiser is on going as well. We are selling 325-gram jars of locally produced Lucky Beez Honey for \$5. \$2.50 from each jar sold will go to the Global Gathering Place... a vital organization that supports immigrants and refugee people

The newsletter should be out this week and I encourage you to have a good read of that - there is information there about a new renewal project - Rural Connect ministry bringing together urban and rural communities of faith - we are excited to be part of this new opportunity which will get going early in the new year.

There is a video available that explains the ministry and it can be found in today’s email, on our website, YouTube channel and on our Facebook page. If you have any questions about what you watch, feel free to contact Board Chair Terry Clarke, Chair-Elect Michael Gorniak, Debra or myself. We’re always happy to chat.

I want to also invite you to start thinking about the time leading up to Christmas – the Outreach committee will soon be asking you to contribute to the Socks of the Homeless ministry and the Egadz bags for at risk youth.

And... that’s it. It is now time for us to move more fully into worship.

Candle Lighting

For 55 years McClure United Church has been a place where the light of God’s love shines...

But its not really the place – it’s the people.

God’s light was shining through the McClure Community long before the building even existed.

And the light of God still shines through each one of you.

And I light this candle as a reminder of that light...

Of God’s light offering healing, love and compassion...

And all the ways that light moves through us.... Individually and as a community.

Call to Worship: Let Us Build a House (MV 1) offered by Elin Sletmoen

Opening Prayer

Holy God, we give you thanks for this time of worship.

Draw us near to you now as you are always near to us.
May we feel your presence....
and the welcome you extend to us... accepting us just as we are...
with all our fears... our sorrows...
and all our hopes and dreams...
We are grateful that you embrace us with your healing love.
Help us in this time to be grounded in you...
To listen for you with intent... in the music, the images, the prayers or the words.
And to be open to hearing your desire for us...
to hearing how we may live your love in the world.
Amen.

Hymn: We are the Church offered by Joyce Lenz and Kate Hidlebaugh

Scripture: Mark 10:46-52 Read by Elaine Nutbrown

⁴⁶They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." ⁵⁰So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." ⁵²Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

*May God bless to our understanding and our living these words of holy scripture.
Amen*

Sermon: Offered by 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.

A few years ago I saw the most beautiful thing. Our beloved Ellen was standing on the cross walk peninsula - Ellen was waiting for the light to change so she could cross Taylor street – she was heading from McClure Place south on McKercher. Ellen is an older adult, she uses a walker for balance; she is physically a rather small woman however what she lacks in stature she makes up for in determination. On the opposite peninsula, heading north toward McClure Place was a member of our youth group. Now I don't know if our youth knew Ellen – or knew that they belonged to the same church family but our youth *noticed* Ellen and when the light changed our youth ran across the street stopped and turned and proceeded to walk beside Ellen – gently accompanying her across the street. Once they arrived together on the south peninsula - our youth turned again to wait for the light to change. I drove through the intersection with tears in my eyes. Our youth noticed Ellen.

One morning, not that long ago, I was standing behind the pulpit and we had just sung our first hymn together. A woman who was recently widowed - was feeling the fresh pain of grief and so she felt the need to exit the worship space. She barely arrived in the lobby when another woman *noticed* her leaving, she too had been grieving the loss of her husband but she was a bit further down the road of grief, when she noticed the first woman leave - she jumped up and headed to the lobby too. Through the glass I could see that the second woman had enveloped the first woman in an embrace – I could see them hovering around a box of tissues. I continued to lead worship with a bit of a lump in my throat. The second woman, noticed the first.

And just this week, while I was writing today's sermon I received a phone call from a member of the our congregation. He called to say he had noticed that

someone in our congregation was going through a difficult time and that they might appreciate a pastoral call. It was not the first time I have receive a call from someone who had *noticed* someone else in pain in fact we are rather good at noticing each other in our need.

Our Gospel lesson today is a story about Jesus noticing the need of another. Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem – the city where he would soon be accused, convicted, and crucified. Jesus was living his last days. Jesus had stopped in Jericho, a town about fifteen miles from Jerusalem and as he was leaving the city accompanied by the disciples and a “large crowd,” he encounters a man by the side of the road to Jerusalem.

By the side of the road sat a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. He must have heard - by the buzz of the crowd - who it was that was about to pass by. And so Bartimaeus began to shout, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.” The crowd didn’t pay much attention to this man and his need - in fact many in the crowd were simply annoyed by him the story tells us that “many sternly ordered him to be quiet,”. One wonders if the crowd had grown tired of the man’s incessant neediness? The streets in and out of the city were often lined with those in need. Perhaps they had grown cold to him and to others? We know what it is to become desensitized to the poor around us. How quickly we too can pass by without looking.

Bartimaeus was not deterred by the crowd’s shushing of him, he simply cried out even more loudly, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Then something amazing happens - the story turns with the next three words, “**Jesus stood still.**” Don’t forget Jesus was headed somewhere, to his appointment with the powers that be in Jerusalem, but he stopped and took *notice*. What a profound difference it made for Jesus to stop and to notice. What a difference it made to the one in need and to the crowd that Jesus stopped and took notice. / What difference is possible if we stop for a moment and pay attention to what is going on around us. //Jesus stood still, took notice and a life was changed.

Then Jesus moved into action. “Call him,” he said to disciples. //Bartimaeus hears voices in the crowd speaking to him “Take heart; get up, he is calling you!” Jesus involves the crowd – you go get the one who is crying out and bring him to me – you go get him – find him – listen for his voice – do what you must to make a path for him to get closer – bring him to me. Jesus stopped and he made his disciples stop – he made the crowd stop. He made the whole gathering stop and notice the one in need. It was because the crowd listened to Jesus, and did what he asked that Bartimaeus was able to ask for what he needed and it changed his life and my hunch is it changed the lives of those who were part of the healing.

Those must have been wonderful words to hear “take heart, get up for Jesus is calling you.”

When Bartimaeus heard the words, he threw off his cloak, *sprang up*, and came to Jesus. I wonder if he was guided by a kind hand? Rather nice to think that someone in the crowd might have offered an arm of assistance or a word of direction. Or did he simply follow the sound of Jesus’ voice. I wonder what that voice sounded like – was it deep and soothing or crisp and authoritative.

When Bartimaeus got to Jesus, Jesus asked a simple but disarming question - a question which calls for the deepest response: "What do you want me to do for you?"

It would be a compelling spiritual exercise for us to imagine Jesus coming to us and asking, "What do you want me to do for you?" It is a tender and vulnerable question. How would you answer?////

In some ways the question that Jesus asks "what do you want me to do for you"? seems to have a rather obvious answer. Bartimaeus is blind - is it not obvious that what he would want is to be able to see again. //Jesus teaches us something important here. For some, who are differently able - the difference is not the problem- it is the assumptions and the perception of others that is the problem. Jesus challenges us to not make assumptions about each others needs but to truly hear the other and respond with compassion.

Bartimaeus had been begging - for alms, for food, for anything that might help him get through the day for a very long time. He knew his deepest need.. "My teacher, let me see again"

Then Jesus says, "Go, your faith has made you well." And Bartimaeus "immediately" regained his sight and then the text says he "followed Jesus on the way,". Those of us who are a bit familiar with Jesus healing stories know that sometimes after Jesus healed someone they would be told to go back to their homes. But this time - Jesus said, "Go your way." And what does Bartimaeus do he choses to follow Jesus on *his* way, and Jesus *way* led to Jerusalem where Jesus

would enter triumphantly on a lowly donkey, turn over tables in the temple, be arrested, tried, nailed to a cross, and die.

Bartimaeus chose Jesus way.

Friends we too have chosen Jesus way.

It is not the easy way – but I believe it is the only way.

It is the way that calls us to stop and notice. As a community of faith, through out our history we have done our best to stop and notice. In our beginnings we noticed the need for a dynamic place for older adults to live and we moved to meet a need. Later we saw the need to create the next step in quality housing for older adults needing assistance and we moved to build Amy's house. In the midst of all of these building projects we saw the need of refugees and so we moved to provide support and care for those new to Canada.

We noticed the need for strong worship and opportunities to grow as disciples. We set in place ministries and study groups and support of youth and young adults.

We noticed need in our community and so we moved to support financially and with our actions helping agencies through out our city, country and world.

We might look and feel different as we emerge from this Covid experience.

But our call to notice the needs of others will not have change.

We are still being called to stop and notice.

To walk beside as the young man in our youth group did,

to support others as the women who offered comfort did

to care as the one who called me to share a concern did.

Together, following the way of Jesus, I believe there will be healing for all.

May it be so.

Amen.

Hymn: We Are Pilgrims (VU 595) offered by Kristie Elliott

Prayers of the People

Gracious God,

There are many things for which we might offer our gratitude to you today... you have blessed us in many ways. But today we hold in our hearts and offer to you our gratitude for this community of faith. for all the people who have found their spiritual home among us... and for the wisdom of those who, 55 years ago, had a vision for what McClure could be.

God, we know you have been with us through it all... guiding, challenging and loving us into who we are today.

And, we know that our work is not complete – there is still so much love to share.

May we continue to be inspired by your desire for us... may we be open to your Spirit – and trust that wherever you lead us is where we need to be... that whatever you call us to do will allow us to live your radical love in the world. And may we remember and truly hold on to the truth that we are never alone. You have drawn us together... and you are with us.

And now together we offer to you our prayers of care and concern for the world... for our friends, families and for ourselves.

We hold before you, O God, those who are in need of our love, our kindness, and our compassion... those in need of our prayers:

those who are struggling right now – with worry, fear, sadness, loneliness, anger

those who are living with health concerns...

those who are grieving...

those who are addicted...

those facing loss and change and uncertainty...

and we pray for those who care for them – for the support workers, family members and friends...

We pray all the painful places of injustice in our world and in our communities...

For those who live with trauma... the trauma that comes from discrimination, rejection, violent words and actions...

For those struggling with their commitment to be good allies, friends and neighbours...

We pray God for all the places of brokenness in your world...

We pray for your healing love and light to reach into those places, offering even a glimmer of hope to those who most need it.

And knowing that we all have our own places and people where brokenness exists, we take another moment now in quiet to hold our brokenness before God – opening even further to the love that is within and all around us. (*silence*)

O God, hear our prayers, receive our hearts and from your deep love may we find the healing and hope we need... today and every day.

And now, we share together the prayer that Jesus taught his friends and disciples: Our Father...

Blessing offered by previous McClure ministry personnel

Sung Blessing: May the God of Hope (VU 424) Offered by Jim Gillis