

## **Worship for February 7**

### **Welcome**

Good morning and welcome to worship with McClure United Church this morning. It is such a comfort and fills me with so much gratitude knowing that folks from this community as well as anyone else who may have stumbled upon this service are joining us to celebrate God's presence in our lives. And we really need to take any opportunity we can to celebrate God's love... a love that is alive and moving within us and all around us. And that's what we will be focusing on today – all the ways that God continues to be known – a reminder that even a nasty pandemic can't keep God away.

And as we celebrate this truth, we also celebrate and give thanks that we are privileged to be gathering on land that has been loved and tended, for many generations, by the first peoples' of this land – we acknowledge that here in Saskatoon we are on Treaty 6 territory - homeland of the Metis people and we pay our respect to the ancestors and keepers of the land.

We also celebrate that this congregation publicly declares our intention live out our commitment as an Affirming Ministry to welcome all of God's people into our love – people of all age, class, ability, race, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation and welcomed and celebrated in this space.

I have a few announcements to share with you today and I'd just like to note that all of the information I'll share with you now can be found in the weekly email, on the website and the facebook page – so go there if you need contact info or more information on how to register and attend.

First... and most important.... today at 11am is our Congregational Meeting to talk our 2021 budget. Information on how to connect to this Zoom gathering is on our website. If you are having trouble finding the information or connecting, please send me a message or call and I'll do my best to help you out.

Our new weekly Bible study has begun. We are gathering each Wednesday at 1pm for about an hour. This study is lectionary based and so folks are welcome to

join when they are able – there is no commitment to come each week – although you are certainly welcome to do so

Also happening now is a fantastic project of our Outreach Committee called “Plant a Heart for Refugees”. For every \$20 donation received during the month of February, a heart will be planted in the snowbanks in front of the church. Cash, cheque or e-transfer are accepted. Please be sure to designate your donation to McClure United Church – Refugees”.

We are also now preparing for Lent – and I have two announcements I’d like to share related to that. First, we will be offering a live Zoom Ash Wednesday service for this interested in joining. That service will be on Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. All you need to participate is the Zoom link, a small bowl of water, and a candle if you have one. And the next evening at 7pm we will begin our Lenten Book Study series. We will be using the United Church’s Lenten book “Faith on the Move” for the study. The books have arrived. If you ordered a book and I have not already contacted you, please send me a message so we can make arrangements. If you did not order a book, I see they now have an e-copy available at UCRD for \$7.95. I will put the link for that on the Facebook page.

Other things to note.. we continue to meet every Friday morning at 10am for our time of check in and connection... so stop by and see some friendly faces.

As you all know Debra is away now on her much deserved sabbatical time. If you would like to connect with me, please know I’m available to you. I know that you all are such a caring bunch and that there’ll be at least a few of you that will be worried I’m too busy for you. I’d just like to lovingly tell you that you’re wrong. I’m happy to chat anytime. I will be working Monday – Friday... my hours, of course, vary from day to day but you can call my cell phone and leave a message anytime or send me an email and I will connect with you as soon as I can. Also, if there is someone you know who maybe isn’t able to connect through technology and may be grateful for a phone call, please let me know that too. I do have some help from folks willing to connect with some members who perhaps are a little more isolated so if there’s a name, yours or someone else’s, that you’d like to add to the list, please let me know... cause here’s the thing, if I don’t know you’re in

need – I can't respond – we deeply desire to be as responsive as we can to our community.

And now, let's breathe deeply of God's love and prepare our hearts for this time of worship...

### **Opening Prayer**

I light this candle as a symbol of the light of Christ that has come into the world – a light that warms us, heals us and brightens our path. This is also a reminder that Christ's light lives within each one of us and that we are called to light the way for others to be able to see God's love at work in the world.

Let us pray...

O God, we come to worship you today from many places, with many different needs, many different hopes. We come with our joy and gratitude and with our suffering and sorrow. Help us to offer our whole selves to you, trusting in your abundant love – your welcoming love – for each one of us, just as we are.

We pray that some part of your love and desire for us will fill our hearts through this time together – a word, a song, a prayer or silence – all intended to connect us to each other and to you.

Help us to put aside whatever may be getting in the way of our presence at this time... guilt, judgment, busyness, frustration, fear – and anything else that separates us. We take just a moment now to offer to you whatever is heavy on our hearts and in our minds.

Thank you for hearing our prayer, for forgiving our mistakes and for loving us in our struggle.

In Jesus' name we pray this. Ame.

### **Hymn**

**Scripture:** Psalm 34 from The Message Version read by Dawn Bell

I bless GOD every chance I get; my lungs expand with praise.

I live and breathe GOD; if things aren't going well, hear this and be happy:

Join me in spreading the news; together let's get the word out.

GOD met me more than halfway and freed me from my anxious fears.

Look at God; give your warmest smile.  
Never hide your feelings from God.  
When I was desperate, I called out, and God got me out of a tight spot.  
God's angel sets up a circle of protection around us while we pray.  
Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see— how good God is.  
Blessed are you who run to God.  
Worship God if you want the best; worship opens doors to all God's goodness.  
Young lions on the prowl get hungry, but God-seekers are full of God.  
Come, children, listen closely; I'll give you a lesson in God worship.  
Who out there has a lust for life?  
Can't wait each day to come upon beauty?  
Guard your tongue from profanity, and no more lying through your teeth.  
Turn your back on sin; do something good.  
Embrace peace—don't let it get away!  
God keeps an eye on friends,  
God's ears pick up every moan and groan.  
Is anyone crying for help? God is listening, ready to rescue you.  
If your heart is broken, you'll find God right there;  
if you're kicked in the gut, God will help you catch your breath.  
Disciples so often get into trouble; still, God is there every time.

### **Reflection**

The Psalm Dawn read for us is one of joy and gratitude for God's loving presence. Certainly something to be joyful about. I, for one, can't imagine what my life would be like without God's love – a love that I experience in the deepest way through connection with others.

And its true that I... along with many of you, I'm sure... am longing for the day when I can hug and shake hands and smile with my mouth at people I at the grocery store. And it would certainly be easy for me to get fully caught up in that longing... but in the same way that the writer of the Psalm finds it in himself to praise God right there in the midst of desperation... of heartbreak... of moaning and groaning... of sin... it is essential that I, that we, find it in ourselves to praise God in the midst of whatever struggle we may be going through at the moment. Church is not what it was a year ago...

But we have not stopped being the church – in fact there are many ways in which we are more active, reaching more people, and being more creative about how we share God’s love – of how we live our lives as disciples.

I would like to share with you now a video of folks connected to this congregation talking about the ways they have been connected to, supported by... loved by McClure United Church over the past few pandemic months.

I share this with much gratitude for everyone who took the time to share.

(shared video of congregation members talking about McClure – there is no text for this video)

## **Hymn**

### **Prayers**

Holy One... we come to you now in praise and gratitude for all the ways you offer your love to us...

through family and friends – phone calls, zoom time and visits when possible.

through the world you created and all of the opportunities it offers us to be amazed – we don’t need to look very far feel the awe of beauty and life, its everywhere.

through motivation and inspiration that breaks through the struggle...

through new insights, ideas – and all the ways we’ve learned to live through this pandemic time.

Together we are grateful for you and for this church and for everyone who continues to keep the community alive and living your mission...

Individually we are grateful as well and we offer those gratitudes to you now in a moment of quiet.

And now, with grateful hearts, we shift our thoughts to those who are struggling and in need of a little extra nudge of love and care...

We pray for everyone who is sick, grieving and living with chronic pain of the body, mind or spirit...

We pray for all those living with violence of any kind – for the fear, the hurt, the uncertainty they face...

We pray for all who are hungry, cold and without the basic necessities that might help them live more abundantly...

We pray for all who are lonely, who feel hopeless, overwhelmed, frustrated, anxious...

And we continue to hold in prayer everyone most impacted by the pandemic.. for those who are sick, for the loved ones of those who have died, for the caregivers, teachers, health care workers and everyone else who continues to work on the front line of our community...

You know the needs of each God... and as we hold all of your people in our hearts, we pray that they will feel your presence surround them, offering even just a glimmer of hope.

And we once again take just a moment of quiet to offer our own prayers of concern to you...

Thank you God for being present to us... for hearing our prayers... and offering your love. May we always be open to receive so that our hearts may be filled to live your love in everything we do.

And in love now we offer together the prayer that Jesus taught...

Our Father/Mother...

**Sung Blessing:** "We are Marching"

### **Spoken Blessing**

We are the church... together.

May we go from this time of worship together,  
renewed in our commitment to God and to each other.

May we be encouraged by God's love

Strengthened by Christ's courage

And energized by the movement of the Spirit –

calling us to continue to shine our lights

as a beacon of hope into a world that needs it.

Amen.