

Worship – August 29, 2021

Announcements

Welcome to worship with McClure United Church.
We do our best to be a church of welcome and mission.

Yeah – Laura is back this week. And so too is Avyn. So together we will be creating some kind of normal along with Irene, Pam and Elaine. Should be fun. Office hours will remain Tuesday Wednesday and Thursday this week.

Calling the church office is a good way to connect with Laura and I and to get information about any number of things. Please also check our website or Facebook page.

I want to remind you about in person coffee time Friday mornings at 10am in the church parking lot. Bring along a lawn chair and your favorite beverage and we will gather for a visit. We can welcome Laura back from holiday and decide together if we are going to continue into September. Everyone is welcome.

Though the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti has slipped away from our news feed the need is still very great. I know some of you would like to help. Financial donations can be made through the United Church of Canada's Emergency Fund. You can make donations to the fund by going to the United Church of Canada website. Donations to the United Church go directly to our partners on the ground in the effected regions – you can be assured your funds go to good use.

Eden and Brook have done some wonderful work for us this summer and now they are off to be students once again. On your behalf I want to thank them for all their hard work and for making McClure a place of learning and mission.

Here is one last note from Eden.

Opening words/ candle lighting

Eternal God, always you are ahead to lead us,
behind to encourage us,
beside to support us,
below to uphold us,
above to cause us to dream.

In this time of worship may we allow ourselves to be
led, encouraged, supported, and upheld.

In this time of worship remind us that we are your people.

We **light this candle** to remind us of God's love for us and for the world.
We light this candle and remember God's promise to be a light for us each
and every day.

Opening prayer

Compassionate God, be present with each of us today. Hold us in
your love. Steady us and remind us that when we are rooted in your love
we can be channels of peace and hope and healing. We pray, as followers
of Jesus. Amen

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the
womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed
you a prophet to the nations." ⁶Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not
know how to speak, for I am only a boy." ⁷But the LORD said to me, "Do not
say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you
shall speak whatever I command you, ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am
with you to deliver you, says the LORD." ⁹Then the LORD put out his hand
and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my
words in your mouth. ¹⁰See, today I appoint you over nations and over
kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to
build and to plant."

Sermon: 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.

It was so very nice to have Irene read scripture for us today. Irene is someone whose voice you often hear when you call the office and need help particularly with financial matters and it is so nice to have her read so that we might put a face with the voice. Irene is of the Catholic tradition, but it is so nice to include her as well as part of our family of faith.

Irene read for us, from the book of Jeremiah which begins with the prophet's call. Now we don't know precisely when in Jeremiah's life he became clear about his call. It could have been when he was a boy or perhaps when he was a young man. It could have been when he was an older man who, when looking back over his life, remembered that God was calling in him from the very beginning. We don't know when Jeremiah's call became clear, but we do know that God knows Jeremiah, and has known Jeremiah since before there was a Jeremiah. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you," the scripture tells us.

One thing we do know about Jeremiah's call is that God called him to a specific task. "I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Which seems like a rather big and perhaps important task. And we are told as well that Jeremiah is not too sure about this calling. However God is quick to help him with his misgivings. God promises to be there for Jeremiah and to give him whatever he needs to live out his call. "Do not be afraid of them," God says, "for I am with you to deliver you." Then God touches Jeremiah lips and puts God's words into Jeremiah's mouth.

From this story of “call” we learn that God knows Jeremiah, God has called Jeremiah to a specific task and that God will supply whatever Jeremiah needs to complete that task. AND there's one more thing that we learn from Jeremiah's call story. We learn that when he lives into his call, it will be good not only for Jeremiah but for all God's people and boy do God's people need some goodness. You see, God's people were in a pickle. They were losing what little political power they had. Their leaders, very shortly, would be taken into captivity in a foreign land, a land where they don't have a clue how to worship God. They needed someone to show them how to worship God in this unfamiliar place. They needed someone to show them how to live their calling as the people of God in drastically changing and uncertain circumstances.

The people needed a prophet. So, God called Jeremiah to be that prophet. And as Jeremiah does his best to live as God asks him, it enables the people around him to do their best to live as God is asking them - to be the people of God regardless of where they are. Thank God Jeremiah although reluctant, answers the call to do what God is asking.

It's easy to put Jeremiah up on a pedestal. He is, after all, a major prophet in the Bible. Most of us have not been called to be “a prophet to the nation.” So what does Jeremiah's call have to do with us?

I think Jeremiah's call is important to us because Jeremiah was an ordinary fellow. If he was called in his youth, as a young man, he would not have been a person of influence or power. Jeremiah was not someone who thought of himself - as someone who could manage the tasks of “prophet hood”. We are not told why God chose him, there is no talk about Jeremiah's great organizational skills or speaking ability, and yet God calls

him. Which means if God can call ordinary Jeremiah, then God can call ordinary you and ordinary me.

We are **all** called to share what we can with other followers. I see it over and over in this place: Good people called to:

- * Called to be involved with youth or young adults or preschoolers or older adults.

- * Called to attend to the church's physical building needs

- * Called to work with the administration and the finances of the church.

- * Called to care for families as they say good bye to loved ones and to serve breakfast to residence of Amy's house and to collect essentials items for those living at Interval House or the Lighthouse or the streets

Called to teach drumming in the parking lot of the church and yoga in the multi purpose room.

- * Called to work not only in our church community but outside the church.

- * Called to work with the homeless and the hungry and the refugees

Called to educate about our planet and how to take better care of it.

- * Called to be good accountants, sanitation collectors, social workers, engineers, artists, teachers, doctors, storekeepers and road pavers.

- * Called to be good moms and dads and aunties and Uncles and grandparents and friends and neighbors.

I believe there is not one person in this church community who has not been called by God. //All of us are known by God. All of us have been called by God to the task of following the ways of Jesus. God promises that God will supply everything we need to fulfill our callings. And when we do "fulfill our callings", when we live our lives of faith, not only will it be good for us, but it will be good for the whole people of God.

Like the people Jeremiah was called to serve we too are living in challenging times. The world is changing around us. The news speaks to us of a world where racism, sexism and a whole host of other isms are running rampant and common decency is getting hard to find. The globe we live on, is changing and is gasping for life. What is happening in Afghanistan is breaking our hearts and the fourth wave of Covid is shaking us to the core. Graves of innocent children are calling us all to hard realities and the important work of reconciliation. Things have gotten so complex that we are not sure what to do. We live in a world that is changing around us. We are God's people living in a strange land just like the people of Jeremiah's time.

And you know I don't even have to look to the news for challenging times I find enough of them in my own life. According to the Smitties menu I am now a senior plus 55, my father, the one who spent his entire life taking care of me is now 87 years of age and though he is in good health - I was over to his suit the other day going through his "Just in Case" book so I would know where things are when he passes on. My two boys are both in university now - one with two years left and the other with - well we are not quite sure. I am no longer the Mom, driving little men to soccer or baseball or music lessons. Every morning, I use to pack lunches and set out something for supper now the first thing I do in the morning is take my medication. My life is changing. Perhaps your life is something like mine. So many changes, new roles, new physical realities, changing family situations. We live in a new time that feels uneasy. Who are we, and how are we to be God's people in this strange land? ///

What was Jeremiah's message to those in the midst of displacement and change? The message was that while the people's situation had

changed, their calling had not. They were still called to be God's people. Yes, circumstances had changed and the world the world was drastically different, but still they were called to be God's people.

Friends when we cry out to God, "so much is has changed and is changing and I don't know who I am anymore!" stop and take a breath listen for God's gentle voice – my hunch is you will hear "I know who you are. I've known you before you where you. You are my child and you are beloved."

We are all known and beloved of God. We are all called by God regardless of our skill levels and circumstances. I am sure God will supply everything we need to live our calling. And when we live our calling as God's people - it will be good for us, and it will also be good for the whole people of God.

Friends, we live in challenging times just as the people of Jerimiah's day. Let us trust our God who calls us - and let us live grounded in the knowledge that we are known and loved and trusted to continue to do all we can do for the good of all God's people.

Amen

Pastoral Prayer

God of our faith, and our doubts, we pray to you.
We pray for our city in which we live and pray and work: for the neighbours you have given us – neighbours of long-standing and neighbours still unpacking. Help us to live through this time of change faithfully. As we grieve the loss of days past, show us the way of hope and peace leading to the future. Teach us to love ourselves so we might love our neighbours as ourselves.
God hear our prayers...

We pray for our nation and for the world: for places wracked with violence, for people trapped by misuse of power – by political tyrants and economic tyrants. And we pray for the earth itself: for creatures and the creation too often devastated by human greed. Turn us around.

God Hear our prayer...

We pray for the church; for McClure, the church we love and for the church universal. For the church now and the church yet to be; for the church called and the church sent – salt and yeast; for the church as a light of hope and a sanctuary in a broken world. We pray for the faithfulness to withstand temptation – the temptations to play it safe. God we pray for courage.

God hear our prayer...

We pray now in silence for those in this congregation whose needs are great; for those in this faith family whose pain is intense. May your profound love be made real in the care of our hands and the care of our hearts.

God hear our prayers for all those whose needs are great..

We gather all these prayers in the name of the one who taught us to pray saying.....

Our Father and 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

Benediction

We leave this time of worship and go to enjoy the last few days of this summer season;

at home or away God will be with us.

In good times and challenging times,- God will support us

As we face our own challenges. God will steady us.

As we face challenges as a church, God will work with us

As we strive to welcome others, God will call us to open hands and hearts.
We have confidence, and we go in hope,
for God calls to us and goes with us.

Amen