

Worship with McClure United Church

~ Remembrance Sunday ~

November 8, 2020

Welcome

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God with McClure United Church.

Today is Remembrance Sunday... always the Sunday closest to Remembrance day. Some of you may know Julia Milne, now Julia Skibinsky... she is the daughter of Doug and Debbie Milne and was a member of our youth group for yeahere at McClure. Julia is now serving as Captain in the Canadian Air Force and is currently deployed in Kuwait. One of the gifts of Covid and moving programming online is that it has provided opportunity for those who aren't in Saskatoon to watch our worship and participate in programs. A couple of times now Julia has joined us on Zoom from Kuwait for our young adult group. That has been such a gift. I'm grateful that Julia was able to be our scripture reader for today... you'll get to see her a little later in the service.

I am also grateful that Padre Troy Irwin, Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Canadian Navy, also in Kuwait with Julia, has offered to us a litany of Remembrance and you will hear his words a little later as well.

I know that many of you attend the yearly Remembrance Day ceremony in Saskatoon and I was happy to see that they are still offering the service this year online. You can watch the service on Shaw Spotlight and it will be live-streamed on YouTube. The link to connect will be in the notes just above this video. An opportunity for those who wish to pay respects and honour to those who have served.

And we have a few other announcements this morning. All of this information, with more details, will be in the email that you should have received this morning along with the video link. It will also be posted on our website and Facebook page if that is better for you.

We are doing socks for the homeless again this year. So grab a pair of warm socks, fill one with things like toiletries, a deck of cards, candy, gift cards... put in the second sock and a Christmas card with a nice handwritten message and bring it to McClure on Sunday, Nov 15 or 22

from 10 to noon or on Wednesday the 18th from 6-8pm. You can contact Carol Claypool if you have any questions and her contact info will be with the other info on the website.

The United Church's Integrated Community Ministries is once again offering the 10x10 art project. An amazing program that brings together artists from diverse backgrounds who live in, work in and support Saskatoon's Core neighborhoods. This year, instead of an in person show, bidding is online until November 19th. The link for bidding will also be posted in the info above and in all the other places I already mentioned. Lastly, an update has been posted regarding in-person worship. We encourage everyone to give it a read through and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. The short of it though is that we will not be returning to in person worship until at least after Christmas and we will reassess in January. As hard as this decision was, we are grateful that we can put our energy into providing online programs and worship without the worry of safety for our beloved church family.

And now as we prepare to enter into worship, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge that we are worshipping together here on Treaty 6 territory and homeland of the Metis People. As an affirming ministry of The United Church, we gratefully welcome all people... whatever your age, race, ability, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation... you are welcome here.

Opening Prayer

On November 11, at exactly 11 a.m. (weather permitting), a beam of sunlight shines through a single window into the Canadian War Museum's Memorial Hall to perfectly frame the headstone from the grave of Canada's Unknown Soldier.

To those who experience the beam of light in that room, it is a sign of reverence and hope.

Reverence for the gift of life and service
and hope that we would continue to be people of peace.

In this moment we bring a light of reverence and hope into our very homes.

This light reminds each of us of the gift of life and God's constant care and encouragement along the way.

LIGHT CANDLE

Let us pray:

Together on this Remembrance Sunday we
recall with tenderness and respect
those who lost their lives from this community
and the many thousands farther afield in the wars
of the last century.

We pray for all those still caught up in conflicts across the world
and acknowledge we have often turned away and not taken up your
call to be peace makers. Even in our own lives we struggle to be in
right relationship with one another.

Help us to meet with you in these moments of worship,
Make us ever mindful of your goodness toward us,
and strengthen us to be aware of the needs of others.
As we pray for peace, may it start with peace in our hearts.

(adapted from a resource written by United Church of Canada military chaplains Captain (Rev.) Audrey Brown and Captain (Rev.) Tyler Powell)

Scripture

Captain Julia Skibinsky from Kuwait

A reading from the Gospel of John

As the God has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept God's commandments and abide in God's love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from God. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that God will give you whatever you ask in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Reflection

The Reverend Harold Appleyard was a priest at Christ Church Anglican in Meaford, Ontario in the late 1930s, early 40s. When war broke out in Europe, Reverend Appleyard heard the call and joined the Grey and Simcoe foresters as a military Chaplain.

Almost as soon as he landed in England, he was struck by the appalling destruction all around him. There was shattered glass everywhere. A lot of it came from stained glass windows that were part of what were now bombed-out churches.

Reverend Appleyard had an idea. He began collecting up the shards of broken stained glass. During the five years that he served overseas in the war, he retrieved glass from over a hundred and twenty-five churches throughout England, Ireland, Wales, France, Belgium and Holland.

He envisioned using these pieces of glass for a memorial window at his Parish Church back home in Ontario.

Well, one night while on volunteer fire duty in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, he met an architect.

An architect who had been responsible for London's ancient churches. And this architect referred him to the Cox and Barnard Stained Glass Works in Hove, Sussex.

That firm offered to design and re-lead all these little bits of glass that Appleyard had collected into windows that would fit into his church back home.

And they did all of this work free of charge in gratitude for the Canadian war effort.

Well a year after the war ended, Christ Church Anglican in Meaford Ontario unveiled five Windows as memorials to the parishioners and townspeople who had been killed or wounded during the years of fighting.

Those windows are still there today.

An amazing reminder of the destruction of war and of the beauty that can come from even the greatest tragedies when we allow our brokenness to be transformed.

Friends... Remembrance Sunday is an opportunity for us to take some time to reflect on the many realities of war... in light of our faith.

What does our faith say to us about war?

And how does our faith call us to respond?

Well, this probably won't come as much of a surprise to you... but Christians don't all agree on whether or not it is acceptable or appropriate for us to participate in a war effort.

Some Christians say.. "absolutely if our country is at War it is our responsibility to participate, to serve on behalf of our country in that armed conflict".

Others Christians might say that it's okay to be part of the war effort but not okay to bear arms. We can be part of the medical team or serve as Chaplain... but not engage directly in war.

And others might say "absolutely not... as followers of Jesus we mustn't participate in war in any fashion.... not at all".

We simply don't agree.

What we do agree on.... I think... is that our faith teaches us that God does not desire for us to be at war with one another.

God does not desire the death and the destruction to people, to communities, to nations, to the Earth itself...

death and destruction that always accompanies War.

And that is 100% outside of God's intention and desire for us...

God calls us to participate in and embody... in the here and now... God's Shalom... God's reign of peace... of justice.

Every war reflects a human failure to live up to that vision.

This we can agree on... war causes death and destruction and God's desire for us is peace and justice.

So this Sunday we take some time to think about what it means for us... as Christians...

that throughout human history War has existed and throughout our own history as a country we have frequently been at War –

So we can reflect on that...

And we can reflect on our response... on our faith...

What does our faith call us to do in the midst of that reality?

I think the story of Reverend Appleyard is so compelling because he took very seriously the reality of what was in front of him.

He didn't skirt around it...

he didn't run from it...

he didn't deny the destruction that was all around him.

He was devastated by it... but devastation wasn't his "take a way".

He didn't throw his arms up in the air in despair and helplessness...

He didn't toss his beliefs out the window and just "give in" to war.

He confronted head-on the harsh reality of what was in front of him.
and he envisioned in the midst of the death... and the destruction.
He envisioned something good... something beautiful... on the other side
of it.

And actually not just on the other side of it...

but by collecting up the broken bits of the world as it was, he began
creating something new right there in the middle of all that brokenness.

And that right there is key... to our faith... to our life

Death and destruction do not have the final word... the last laugh.

Goodness... beauty... hope.... Peace.... they were there in the
beginning... there are here with us today... and they will be there in the
end.

Our faith calls us to understand that beauty and life and transformation
does not come by skirting around what is hard... and ugly... and painful...
and destructive in life

but by moving through it and allowing it and ourselves to be transformed.

That is the story of Resurrection.

That is the model we have in Jesus Christ who came into the world... was
part of the world... shared in the Brokenness of the world
and was broken himself.

God takes that Brokenness and works Resurrection... works
transformation.

That's how God works and that is God's vision for us...

That is our model of faithful living.

It's pretty clear that that's the path for us.

The path is to work with the broken bits of reality as they are...

to envision something new and beautiful...

to start where we are and build that new and beautiful thing.

And I think its important to note that Reverend Appleyard was not able to
do that entirely on his own.

He collected up the bits...

but if it was just up to him, all we would have is a pile of broken glass.

He had to work with others to see what was possible.... to make a plan...
and to create these amazing windows.

That is also part of our calling.

None of us on our own...

and no one nation on its own...

can be the creator of the kind of transformation that is needed.

We all need to work together.

And we need to trust that God is in the mix... always with us – guiding, strengthening, loving.

In fact it is God who works the transformation... and we are coworkers... working with God in that transformation.

At least... we can be.

In the midst of those things that shatter our lives, that destroy our world, that break apart our relationships, we need something to hang onto.

We need some way forward that will allow us to keep going.

That is spiritual resiliency.

That's what Reverend Appleyard gave to himself or built for himself by collecting up those bits of glass.

He chose hope over despair.

He chose vision over assuming that what was around him was the sum total of all that was possible.

That led to his own resiliency and ultimately led to incredible beauty and inspiration...

And it that continues to offer vision... possibility.. hope... to everyone who sees those windows and everyone who hears these stories.

We need to always seek ways to build our spiritual resiliency...

to hope, to vision and to concrete acts of transformation.

What are the things we can do... no matter how seemingly small or insignificant... what are the things we can do that will help us build that resiliency?

What things help us defy the story that things as they are in the moment are not the only possibility for how things can and probably should be?

Every little act of resistance... every little act of hope defies that story.

There is always another way.

So whatever it is that you can do... that I can do...

that we can do together...

Anything that says “we believe that a better world is possible”

What we can do... we must do it.

We must acknowledge the brokenness of what is... with our eyes on the vision of what could be.

And we need to travel that path to what is possible... together.

So this remembrance Sunday...we remember those who served, those who fought for the rights and freedoms of others... armed or not...

those who have desired and struggled for peace in whatever way they believed was right for them...

we remember... their faithful witness... their hope that perhaps the conflict now might bring an end to conflict in the future....

And we remember those who held the vision of possibility... of hope... and of peace.

Let us learn from what they have done...

What their actions have taught us...

and together let's continue to build the world that God desires.

Prayers of the People

God of love, we open our hearts to you now in prayer in this Sabbath time.

We open our hearts with Thanksgiving:

We give you thanks for this winter day, for the crispness of the air which awakens us to the beauty and strength of creation and our place within it.

We give you thanks for our communities of faith that support each of us as we move through life.

We give you thanks for the country in which we live, a country that does its best to acknowledge it's mistakes and where we work together towards reconciliation and where we value peace with justice.

We give you thanks for those, who despite their fears are still willing to be open to your call to defend others with their very lives and we give you thanks for those who years ago, stood against evil and who gave up their lives in the quest for good.

God of healing, we pray for those among us who are sick, those who are suffering, those who are lonely.

We pray for those who are grieving, especially we remember this morning those who will always mourn the parent or spouse or sibling or the child who did not come home from war.

We pray for those who are hungry and for those who are homeless especially for those whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed by fighting.

We pray for refugees everywhere that there might be a day when all refugees can return to their Homeland, if they wish to do so and rebuild the lives that they were forced to abandon there. We pray for the Swid family the refugee family it is our privilege to welcome and help settle. May they know rest and peace and a sense of home among us.

God of peace, we pray for peace not just for ourselves but for all your people of every nation. We pray that conversations might prevail over anger, love might prevail over hatred, and that the search for justice might prevail over the quest for retribution.

We pray especially this morning for our neighbors in the United States as they struggle in the midst of an important election result.

Blessing

So having gathered, remembered, reflected and prayed,
we ask for God's blessing now as we move into our week.
We give thanks for God's continued presence in our lives.
Let's remember that no matter where we go...God is there.
No matter what we do... God is there.
And no matter how bleak the world may seem,
God is always working with us... transforming us...
encouraging us to hold onto hope and live into the peace
that is God's vision for us and for the entire world.
So go in peace.
Amen.