

# **Worship with McClure United Church**

January 24, 2021

## **Announcements**

### **Debra's Sabbatical Leave Begins February 1st**

The essence of sabbatical is rooted in the biblical practice of the Sabbath day described in the creation story. Jesus kept this practice when he took time in his ministry for renewal. He often went away to pray and reflect in silence and meditation "on mountain tops and by lakesides".

The daily practice of ministry may involve the pressure of many tasks compressed into too few hours, leaving little opportunity for reflective, prayerful time. In the context of ministry, sabbatical time is for learning through reflection, revitalization and recreation.

Debra will begin her sabbatical February 1, 2021 and will return to us July 19, 2021. She will be attending a preaching conference and taking a class at the Atlantic School of Theology virtually and will be doing some professional reading as well as meeting with a Spiritual Director.

### **February 7th Worship Celebration**

Laura is putting together a little something for the February 7th worship service. We need to remind ourselves and others that we continue to be the church even without access to the building.

She is looking for people willing to contribute to this service. Specifically, people who are willing to make a video of themselves talking about how they have appreciated McClure during the pandemic. Perhaps you have enjoyed worship, or a study group or one of the outreach projects? Maybe you've enjoyed the congregational check ins, the phoning tree or a pastoral phone call?

If you are willing, please let Laura know ASAP at [laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org](mailto:laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org). We will require the videos by February 2nd.

Lets celebrate all of the ways that God continues to work through and in us.

## **Congregational Meeting Reminder**

On Sunday, February 7th, all members and adherents of McClure United Church are invited to participate in a congregational meeting, the primary purpose of which is to consider the 2021 Operating and Capital budgets. The meeting will be called to order at 11AM and will be convened using the Zoom computer conferencing platform.

More information can be found on our website at <http://mcclureunitedchurch.org/congregational-meeting>.

## **Email Book Club**

Join other reading enthusiasts for an email book club.

Here's how it works:

- Once a group of names has been collected, an email will be sent out to all members requesting a book suggestion. The book can be fiction or nonfiction, faith-based or secular. The suggested books will each be assigned a month (hopefully we will have a chance to read and discuss everyone's book selection).
- On the designated start day, the person who selected the first book will begin the discussion by posting a little bit about why they chose that book and if they have already read it, what they liked about it
- Over the next month everyone will have an opportunity to send emails to the group sharing their own observations, questions, comments and others are welcome to respond.
- You can share as often or as little as you are comfortable.
- People can join at anytime
- Everyone is welcome

If you have any questions or would like to join the Book Club, please email me (Rev. Laura Fohse) at [laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org](mailto:laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org) or phone/text 306-291-5838.

## **Zoom Bible Study**

An opportunity to read, learn and discuss the Bible with other UCCan folks. Each week we will engage with one lectionary passage for the upcoming Sunday.

Beginning February 3rd and happening every Wednesday at 1pm.

To register, visit our website.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

### **Broadview Magazine Subscriptions**

Formerly known as the Observer, Broadview is an independent Canadian magazine featuring award-winning coverage of spirituality, justice and ethical living. Through compelling stories and engaging images, Broadview challenges and inspires readers seeking to live a purpose-filled life.

All renewals and new subscriptions must be received by the office by January 31st, 2021. Annual Group Subscription rate is \$25 each (taxes included).

Please phone the McClure Church Office at (306) 373-1753 to place your magazine order.

### **Scripture Readers Needed**

Are you interested in reading scripture for our Sunday morning services? We are looking for a variety of people of different ages to share this ministry with us.

Generally people video themselves on their phone or computer and send it to our video producer by Friday of each week. If you would like to participate but do not have (or are not comfortable with) technology, we can help!

We would like to create a reading schedule until the end of March. If you are interested, please contact Laura at (306) 291-5838 or email [laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org](mailto:laura@mcclureunitedchurch.org).

### **Opening Prayer/Call to Worship**

As we gather for worship, we light this candle – as a symbol of the light that Jesus brings and a reminder for us to let our light shine so that others may know his love,  
(light candle) Jesus Christ – light of the world.

Every time we answer your call, O God, we meet you again as if for the first time. Each moment is a revelation. Each meeting leads to our hearts opening wider to you and to others.

Each encounter shines light onto the strength of relationships as we follow Jesus the Christ—

the one who invites us... who prepares us...

the one who is our companion... who is our guide,

the one who is the Giver... who is the Gift.

We thank you, God, for calling us..

Help us now to respond.

We pray this in the name of the one we follow. Amen.

## **Scripture**

### **Mark 1:14-20**

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." <sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

## **Reflection**

**Prayer:** May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be a source of wisdom and strength for the living in our time. Amen.

I am always surprised and a bit sad about how quickly Lent begins after Christmas. Lent being that time of year when we journey with Jesus to the cross, the time of year we explore in depth of our commitment to walk as a disciple of Jesus. This year we will jump into Lent, February 17<sup>th</sup> - just three and a bit weeks from now. I've hardly packed up the creche of lambs and angels, manger and magi gifts and here we are almost at the cross. I

rather like the Christmas Jesus – I like him--tiny and silent, all wrapped in swaddling clothes, oh so very cute and precious.

In Mark's Gospel from which our lesson comes today, the BIRTH of Jesus is completely left out. No Bethlehem, no shepherds, no Wisemen, no angels. It doesn't say anything about Mary or Joseph--or the baby. By the time Mark picks up the story--Jesus has long--since crawled out of the manger--and is done with his swaddling clothes. He's developed his voice--he's found his legs--and he is loose in the world.

In Mark's Gospel the story moves quickly, Jesus has ditched the manger, broken loose, and has gone out to find disciples - come out to find us. And unlike the baby in Bethlehem, he's got a voice and he uses it. He calls people's names. Mark's gospel just blows right past the whole birth episode; and after just a few words about John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism and temptation, Mark dumps us out on the beach, invites us to watch four fisherman who are just minding their business, literally, when a thoroughly grown-up Christ comes to where they are and invites them to - "Follow me!"

Mark's world has no time for a tiny, silent, wrapped in swaddling clothes, cute little baby. Mark's world needs an active Jesus that can show the way.

Simon and his brother Andrew are the first up. Jesus sees them just doing their job. Mark doesn't tell us any of the details--what they saw in each other, why Jesus picked them, what kind of conversation they might have had, what questions might have been asked, what feelings these fishermen may have felt. Mark just cuts to the chase. Jesus says, "Follow me," and without a word they get up and go.

James and John are next. Farther down the beach they're sitting in a boat with their father mending their nets- doing their job. And, again, Mark doesn't show us anything but the highlights. Jesus comes to them, he sees them, he calls them, they go. They dropped everything and follow. I can't imagine what it must have been like that day on the Lake, busily doing what you've done a million times before. Putting the lines in the water, gathering the fish, throwing back the little ones, mending the lines. Feeling the familiarity of the one next to you, working side by side. Just an ordinary day and then suddenly, there is this man Jesus, inviting them to follow.

And suddenly there is an awakening, an acknowledgement that this is no ordinary day and this is no ordinary man and this request to follow is no ordinary request.

As Mark tells these stories, he doesn't give us any sense of the very real, inner struggle that's involved in making this kind of decision--in discerning your life's purpose. Mark pretty much leaves out the process of deciding, discerning, choosing--all the stuff we'd really like to know.

Maybe Mark leaves out the process because, in the end, the process is not the point. The point is that Jesus finds them, calls them, and the call is to **go with him into the world**. It's not about committing to a doctrinal statement or a program or some denominational tradition--it's about personal commitment to the way of Christ. Jesus never said--"Come, be a Christian" or "Come, embrace this philosophy" or "Come, do this ministry." He said, "Come with me --belong to me--follow me."

Mark tells us that on the first day, the disciples, after abandoning their nets and their former lives, travel to Capernaum and enter the synagogue. Those who are called, spend that first day watching Jesus teach and they are astounded at his teaching and the power within the teaching. While there Jesus does the work of healing, the story tell us Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit. Then they leave the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. Jesus takes her by the hand and lifts her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. In the evening, the people of the town brought Jesus all who were sick - that was day one. The next morning Jesus got up before dawn and went to a quiet place to pray.

Often, my hunch is, that when we hear these stories of "call" in the Bible we quickly moved to wonder about our own call and what we are supposed to do. But maybe the stories of call are less about what we are supposed to do and more about understanding that Jesus breaks into our ordinary lives, into the midst of our work and day to day labours to invite to follow his way.

Quite frankly we live in times where we need the kind of Jesus that can show up into our mess and the world's mess and show us something new, something healing and hopeful. To show us a way that releases us from

what binds us. When you read the Bible, it becomes clear that Jesus has no investment in putting anybody in any kind of vocational straight jacket. We are simply called to follow Jesus, into the world, to see and to heal it.

Remembering our calling—is to simply follow --gives us the freedom to change--and to grow--and even to blow it and find our way back again. And in those moments when our day to day life seems unbearably demanding or dull, remembering our call which - is to simple follow the way of Jesus --will help us become the disciples Jesus desires.

The Gospel writer Mark, reminds us that the world needs us to move now, beyond the comfortable, tiny and silent Jesus, to the Jesus who calls us out into the world. Who calls us to move, to watch, to follow, to heal, and to pray.

The call found in Mark is not to a job but rather to a way. And it is not just for the special but for everyone.

To follow is not for the squeamish! Sometimes it's hard being one who follows the way of Jesus.

The thing is, you want to follow Jesus but some people can make you bug-eyed crazy! There are days when I look at what we as humans can do to one another, and I want to grab a carton of Ben & Jerry's and hide, and some days I do.

But God won't let me stay there. And in those worn-out, bleary-eyed moments. I am reminded, by the one I follow, that when Jesus was about ready to punch his timecard and call it a day. He looked outside--saw the whole city gathered around his door! And he put his time card back in the slot and reached down into the empty well of himself and told his disciples: "Bring them in...this is why I came."

When we lean into our call, to follow, we will remember that belonging to Jesus and serving means living with some tears and some sweat and even sometimes flecks of our own blood.

There seems to be something else in this story from Mark today - and it's this: that everyone who answers the call of Christ, leaves something behind--did you notice that? Andrew and Simon leave their nets; James

and John leave their father. We can't follow Jesus and not be willing to change what's in our hands and what's in our hearts, to leave some of the past behind in order to move forward.

I believe Christ is calling you and me today-- his calling comes fresh every day—we might ask what we need to leave behind in order to get up and go? To follow Jesus, means to be changed, to move on, to leave some things behind. When Jesus says, "Follow me," and we say, "OK," we might not be able to predict where that's going to lead us. It's all right not to be sure of what it all means and how it'll all work out. All that matters is that Jesus has seen us as we are, has loved us and called us to follow.

That's enough for today.

### **Prayers of the People/Lord's Prayer**

Now, wherever we are... whatever we are doing... we gather our hearts together and offer ourselves to God in prayer. Let us pray....

Gracious, eternal God, we thank you that Jesus' call to his disciples happened as it did. He did not start with the privileged and the wealthy and the powerful. He did not begin with those who had little need and little desire for change. He began with some very ordinary folks. Folks who were curious, open and probably a little desperate for something different.

We pray that we will hear his call, "Come, follow me," in our hearts today.

May we hear again the challenge to be disciples.

May we hear again the message of this one who brings such us good news.

May we hear again the invitation to come to you, "all you who are weary and heavy laden."

May we hear again words of hope which tell us that however dark the world becomes the darkness cannot ever overcome the radiant light of Jesus.

May we hear again those simple words: "Come, follow me," and may we come, just as we are, and know again the depth of your grace and love for us.



God, although we long to forget much of what is happening in our world today, we hold to you all of what we feel in our bodies: our sadness, our anger, our and those around us, our longing to move on, our wish for hope. All of these feelings, and many others, we offer to you and we ask that you hold them as we continue to work through them ourselves.

We pray that we, and those around us, may be understanding as we each do this work at different times and in different ways.

We ask that you help us to find a way to sit with our emotions while also sitting with you.

Although we often want to separate ourselves from the actions of others we ask that you forgive us and guide us to check ourselves for the hatred, the racism, the bigotry, and the lack of love that we reveal in ways that we do not even realize, or that we choose to ignore.

Guide us God and deepen our hearts that we might comprehend that no matter how good we think we are; we need to ensure that we are embodying your love in every action and word.

Healing God we pray for all in our community and in our church family who seek your presence and have asked for our prayers.

O God, we pray for those whom we name before you now in the silence of our hearts...

God, we ask for your presence as the world continues to experience the ravages of Covid-19 We pray for the places all around the world where the number of positive test results continues to climb and as lockdowns continue to grow longer.

We pray for all those in our local and church community affected by the pandemic, those who are ill, those who are grieving a loss, those who are anxious, isolated and alone, those health care workers responding to and caring for our health needs and all of the essential workers who are helping to keep our community going.

Finally, God, give us the power to bring change and transformation to the peoples of the world as did those early fishermen. Give us the power to provide the same kind of hope for the world-weary as they brought to theirs. Give us the vision of a world transformed and let us join together as we speak the Prayer of Jesus together...

## **Blessing**

Friends let us continue our journey walking in love

Let us care for each other and care for the earth

Let us seek Justice and make Peace.

God goes before us so let us live our lives boldly, following in the ways of Jesus.

And may the grace of Jesus the Christ

the love of God and the

companionship of the Holy Spirit be with us

this day and every day.

Amen.