

Hymn: Great Is Thy Faithfulness <https://youtu.be/0k1WhFtVp0o>

The commander of a local army post received a complaint from one of the soldiers about the bread he was being served. The commander snapped back at him angrily, "If Napoleon had had that bread in Russia, he would have eaten it with the greatest delight." The soldier replied, "Yes sir, but it was fresh then."

When bread has gone stale, it has lost its softness and its flavour. When life has gone stale for us, it is no longer fresh or exciting. So Hamlet laments, "How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world" (1, ii, 129). And yes, personally, Hamlet was a big whiner...but you know that that viewpoint exists widely in our world today. Hopelessness of life is increasing in our society, the pandemic has not helped. How do you keep life fresh? If it has gone stale, how do you restore its freshness?

For Christians, since the dawn of our faith in Christ, the answer is in practising the rhythms of our faith. Jesus was referring to these rhythms when he said, "I am the gate. Whoever comes in by me will be saved; he will come in and go out and find pasture" (John 10:9). Rhythm is a movement with regular repetition of beat; a flowing back and forth like the ebb and flow of the tides.

The first rhythm of our faith is the rhythm between gathering and going forth. Thinking of his followers' need to gather around him, Jesus said, "Come home, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28). At another time, Jesus said, "Go, then to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples" (Matt 28:19). So in the church there is always this movement in for renewal and out for the outpouring of our lives for others and for the kingdom.

The second rhythm of our faith the movement between discipling and living grace filled lives. We come into the ways of discipline and we go out into the freedom of faith. For example, each time the disciples went out on their own to preach the good news of God's kingdom, they came back to Jesus for more discussion, sometimes correction and always more teaching to be added on to their newest experiences.

The third rhythm of our faith is the rhythm between localizing and universalizing. Life at Westminster gives Christianity a "local home and a name". Yet, unless we look beyond our local loyalties, we are apt to reverse one of Wesley's axioms "The world is my parish" to "The parish is my world!" The call of our witness is local for sure, we will find much of our support and our efforts in the local framework, but we are members of the Kingdom of God and His Kingdom is over this entire world, so we are also always to be aware that our efforts and our call of

faith is also into the whole world.

As the vaccines begin to be distributed here in the Soo, it is safe to begin to imagine an eventual return to our regular ebb and flow of our church's life in Christ. I know we are all looking forward to returning to worship without masks and to be able to sing hymns, laugh together and have a potluck dinner!...(or maybe that's just me?!). In any event let us take this time to reflect on the rhythms of our faith in Christ and look forward to the time when we will be able to draw together again for full worship, fellowship and renewal. May the Peace of Christ be with you all.
Rev. John

Prayer

O God, as the season changes from winter to spring we witness the beginning of the renewal of the land before our eyes. Birds return to our yards, trees begin to bud, the grass begins to green up, and there is greater energy in our steps. In the same way Lord, there is a new spring beginning in our lives as we start to see the eventual release from the bondage of the Covid 19 virus and the hope that begins in our hearts for a renewal of our worship to you. Father you have been with us through this time of trial, You have held us up, sustained us and grown our faith even in the midst of the trial of this Pandemic. Thank you Lord for your faithfulness to us in leading us through our valley of the shadow of death. Lord, as we begin to look forward to the day when we can gather again without yellow tape on our pews and to an ability to lift our voices once again in praise to Your mercies, instill in us a profound sense of gratitude for our church, for our church family and for your call on our hearts through Jesus Christ. Give us a greater hope for our future because of our increased faith through this recent trial; for as we have known Your presence through this recent valley, we can now know your goodness will be with us as we go forward with renewed energy and hope for a stronger tomorrow. We pray this in Jesus' name.
Amen.