

**WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5

*“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”*

July 31st, 2022

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship:

God is with his people.
He dwells in their midst.
Listen and hear him speak.

**Our hearts long for his word.
We wait upon the Lord
so that we may renew our strength.**

God is our help and our support.
His spirit moves among us
to lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days.

**With joyful hearts we sing God's praise.
With rejoicing we call upon Him.
The Lord is our hope and our salvation.**

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us.

Birthday Train: We have one birthday this week. It is Buomkuoth Mawau who is 3 today. May he have a wonderful and exciting birthday.

Offerings and Tithes: Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. Contributions may be made in person, by mail, or by e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: The King of Love my Shepherd is - 691

Opening Prayer:

God, companion and guide, we would be lost without your direction — wanderers in wildernesses of our own making.

We praise you for dealing so graciously with your people in the past, when you guided them to freedom and a promised new life.

We are heirs of that promise fulfilled in Jesus, our Redeemer and Lord.

Through him, you have established for us a permanent direction for our lives and as we dwell in him, our lives are blessed with fruitfulness.

Holy God, may this time of worship be a joyful response of praise and thanksgiving for all that you have done, for all that you are doing, and for all that you will continue to do for us and all people through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus. And may we continue to pray as you taught your disciples saying , Our Father ... Amen.

...We Listen to God's Word...

Word of God:

Old Testament: Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34:11 - 16

New Testament: Luke 15:1-10

Hymn: Come let us sing of a wonderful Love - 706

Message:

Did you ever go to the Busker festival when it was here? We did not go every year but we went fairly often. I really liked the Busker festival that has developed here because the performer did not have to wait - or entice - a crowd to come and watch. On Queen street, there were stations with a schedule of performers. If you were very keen and wanted to see all of the acts you move from one station or performance circle to another. There are never two acts at once. I liked that. I hated waiting for the crowd to form when we went to the Busker festival in Ottawa. The performer would spend ten to fifteen minutes or more enticing a crowd to watch. We would wait and wait only to find out the performance was not that great.

I am talking about crowds because I am interested in the fact that Jesus never seems to have to work at getting a crowd. The crowd just seems to form around him and suddenly there are enough people to start teaching - as if the crowd is waiting for some sort of performance to start.

The crowd that gathers for the stories of Luke 15 is interesting because of its mixed group of people. The people who were normally ignored, the tax collectors and sinners, were the ones who had formed a crowd around Jesus. This had started to attract attention so another group started to take note of what was going on. They were the Pharisees and the scribes (teachers of the law) - two groups that hung out together. The Pharisees start to grumble or mutter or really it is that talk that is to no one in particular and everyone at the same time. You know, it is that comment that is made to your buddy but you really want Jesus to hear it. You really want the crowd to hear it. It is actually an accusation - that goes something like this. Did you know that Jesus is hospitable to sinners - he takes them and eats with them and treats them like friends? Isn't that awful?

He should be more careful who he befriends.

This sets the scene for the three stories Jesus tells - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son. If I were naming these stories they would be the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost sons. Jesus uses some of the same speech techniques that the Pharisees use and it is an interesting path that Jesus takes them down and us along with them.

He asks, "If you had 100 sheep and you lost one would you not leave the other 99 in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? We nod yes. Then wouldn't you put the sheep over your shoulders and getting home call everyone you know and host a party? Um, sure. Maybe if I were a shepherd

Or imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one - does she not light a lamp, and start sweeping, cleaning and straightening, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds the coin? Um, maybe... And would she not call all her friends and neighbours to a party because she found her coin? Um - No? - she might post it on Facebook. But a party? Over a lost coin?

Do you see what is happening? We are rejoicing with Jesus about the lost sheep and the lost coin because they are such whimsical, joyful stories. But you must realize the answer to all the questions is really 'no'. A shepherd does not leave all of the sheep alone in the wilderness to find one sheep - that would be foolish. That is why there is a shepherd in the first place - sheep cannot be left alone. They have small brains, they need lots of help - they are a domesticated animal! And if you found it, you might tell a friend that night - it would be a great story for the campfire some long evening but a party? That is very extravagant for a lost sheep. Sheep are always getting lost! Maybe a shepherd would be so foolish to throw such a party - they were not considered very smart, you know.

The same is for the story about a woman - really would we spend all day searching and searching for the one missing coin from the collection? I know for myself, I will make an initial search and then maybe do something else and look again. Tell others to keep an eye out for the lost item. Sweep the whole house - maybe for my passport - but for a missing coin? Probably not. Then call all your friends and tell them that you were dumb enough to lose such an important item and that you found it? Then throw an extravagant party? Worth more than the coin? Not likely. But I have heard it said, maybe a foolish woman would....

Here we are, set up again by Jesus. If we say yes, we understand this story then we are aligning ourselves up with the foolish people. If we say no, we are aligning ourselves with solid people but not with God. Both these stories are based on Old Testament images that the Pharisees would have recognized. Certainly the shepherd and sheep image - very popular in the Old Testament, very popular with artists now. Jesus and a shepherd crook, Jesus with the sheep over his shoulder. How about Jesus with the broom, with the freshly swept floor. Yeah, no one has painted that picture yet. However, it is the missing picture. Sweeping is an Old Testament image. God is sweeping, cleaning - it symbolizes the care of God as He looks after his people. I really want a picture of Jesus with a broom.

Actually, I do not just want this picture of Jesus sweeping with his broom, I want the picture of Jesus searching for the sheep as well. There are times that I just need to be found. You see, I have a feeling that these stories are about different ways of being lost. Have you ever felt lost? Lost spiritually, physically, mentally? Just lost. It is a distressing feeling.

Note the sheep - as I said - sheep are always getting lost. I hear it happens all the time. Does the shepherd berate the sheep for being lost again - or all the sheep for doing what sheep are prone to do? Nope - he goes looking because that sheep is as important as all the other sheep. He will foolishly look for that lost sheep - that sheep that keeps getting lost. If this shepherd throws a party every time he finds a lost sheep he is going to go broke! Now for you theological types, I am not talking about saved or unsaved - I am talking about feeling lost. I think that there are many of us who should take great hope in this fact that the Good Shepherd always goes looking for the lost sheep - when I am lost like that - rather foolishly but I am a sheep I want that very kind, Good Shepherd.

Now note the coin. The coin did nothing on its own to get lost. It was simply misplaced, or fell off the necklace and got lost. In fact, you cannot even blame the coin for getting lost. It is simply lost with no idea how it got there or even that it should be part of a set. I think this is very important for us to know because sometimes people are just lost. They have no idea how they got there or how it happened - they may not even know that they are lost. Yet the set knows that there is a coin missing. The woman knows that one is missing and she is not giving up on that lost coin until it is found. The whole house will be cleaned and straightened. No nook or cranny will be left alone. The coin must be found! Is that not good news? Jesus just keeps sweeping because he knows that the coin is there. It can be found. I like this image of God, broom in hand, patiently sweeping away the dirt from our lives and restoring us to our God-given image. In this way, we are each uniquely found by God, since we each have our own unique way of being lost

Being lost can just happen. Sometimes we foolishly travel down the wrong trail only to find out that we are lost. Other times we find ourselves lost in the circumstances of life without knowing how we got there. We are just lost. We have a wonder God who will act as the foolish as the shepherd, and as determined woman to find us. He is more than willing to pick up his broom and search! That, I think, is really good news. May this be your good news for today.

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People:

Holy and Gracious God, you call us by name, Beloved One, and beckon us to follow you. May we do so through your grace.

In your Name we pray, hear our prayer.

Like a shepherd tending the flock you tend to our needs. Be present with those who struggle, suffer, are in pain or sorrow. Guide those who are lost, or filled with worry and fear. Protect those

who are in harm's way heal those who are ill, mend those who are broken, as only your love can.

God of peace, watch over those who lead us in our various governments and churches. Fill our leaders with wisdom, patience, insight, and mercy. Help them to lead with kindness and strength.

God of love, fill our hearts with the knowledge of You that we can turn from the distractions of life and be more like You. May we be agents of your compassion, offering kindness to those we meet this day.

God of all blessings, we thank you for all the gifts of life. For your Son, our Savior, our great Good Shepherd, the one who stands at the gate of all life's challenges and joys, calling out to us in love. Naming us, Beloved.

For all this, and more we pray. Amen.

Hymn: Amazing Grace - 670

Benediction

Announcements for July 31st

1. **Birthdays at Westminster** - Buomkuoth Mawau has his birthday today!
2. **Children's Choir!** Westminster is going to start a children's choir for the community. We are very excited about this adventure! We are looking for 7 year olds and up who love to sing. Start date is Thursday, September 15th at 6:30pm. The expectations for singing in the Westminster service are once every four or five weeks. The choir would not be expected to sing in the worship service every week. Please contact me, Charlene Wilson, Peter Scoffield or Westminster Church if you know someone who would like to be part of this.
3. **Take note. Voices at the Cross.** This will be happening on August 27th, in the evening. The poster is on the bulletin board with more information.

Prayers - Wednesday July 27th, 2022

Psalm 54:2, 4 Hear my prayer, O God: listen to the words of my mouth... Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.

Praise Reports

Karli Campbell and Mitchell Dionisi were married at Westminster on Thursday, July 28th. It was a beautiful wedding!

Birthdays

Bev Stewart - Monday, July 25th, Brendan Wilson - Tuesday, July 26th, Andrew Wilson - Wednesday, July 27th. May they be blessed with many wonderful gifts on their birthdays.

Prayers

Lord we are mindful of the ongoing tragedy and horror of the war in the Ukraine that just seems to continue on each day. Lord we pray for the people who have left the Ukraine and watch from a distance and wait to hear news of loved ones. We pray for those who have stayed and hear shelling every day. Lord be with them and protect those who simply want to live in peace and safety. Give these people hope and comfort, we pray. And please Lord, bring this war to an end.

We pray for the family of Betty Carscadden as they gather this weekend for her Celebration of life service on Saturday. May they enjoy the time that they have together as they remember all that Betty was to each one of them.

We pray for John and Charlene's friends, Neal and Debbie Mathers as they attempt to travel home from Saskatchewan. They are just recovering from Covid and are quite tired. We pray that their journey will be safe and uneventful.

We pray for Lora Serre. She had covid but is now back to work. A little tired but glad to be feeling better.

We pray for Ursula Hagen who is in hospital. May she know your presence every day and may the family know that you are with them as well.

We continue to pray for Josie who is still in the hospital from a series of issues. We are thankful that she is improving. Be with her, Lord, and may she heal and recuperate quickly. Be with her family who have been giving her support all through this time. Strengthen them, Lord, and give them and Josie's care team wisdom in what are the 'next steps'.

We lift up a person who is struggling with depression and feelings of negative self worth. We pray that he is able to hear the words of encouragement, of hope and of worthiness that come from others and from You. We also pray for others that we know who are struggling with mental

health issues. We bring these names to you and pray that they would seek out help.

Lord, we pray for those who are dealing with cancer.

We pray for Melinda's family as Uncle Ronny passed away Thursday night. Be with the family as they remember all that he was to the them. May they know your comfort and kindness at this time.

We pray for Charlotte who as diagnosed with multiple cancers last year and is now on a maintenance program. We pray for the family who are finding the trip to London each month to be somewhat difficult. Give them strength and courage. We pray for Your on going watch care and encouragement for Charlotte and her family.

We pray for Grayson who will be finishing his cancer treatment this fall. We pray that he is able to keep on track with treatment this summer so that he is able to meet this goal in the fall.

We pray for Sharon's friend, Patsy, who is recovering from cancer surgery. Lord, we pray for excellent recuperation and ask for your complete healing for Patsy.

We continue to pray for Sharon's friend's husband who has cancer. May his treatment be going well this summer. May they find ways to enjoy this time of year even with his on going medical issues.

We continue to pray for Peter's sister-in-law who is still battling cancer. Be with her and be with Peter and his family as they try to support her.

Lord, we pray for those who are facing a variety of medical issues.

We pray for Beth's friend's son who was in a very bad accident. Lord, we thank you that he is alive and able to sit up in a wheelchair already. We pray for your continued healing of his multiple injuries and that he will be able to go fishing at some point this summer.

We pray for Joan Van Bentham who broke her leg a week ago. May she heal quickly and be able to enjoy the summer.

We pray for Carol Jean as she continues to recover from her broken arm. Bless her and give her a speedy recovery.

We pray for Jody Arthurs who broke her leg in a bike accident. Be with her as she waits for the break to heal and recovers from this injury.

We pray for Michael Ferlino who broke his wrist. He has many things that he wants to do, Lord so we pray that you would grant him a speedy recovery as well. Also grant him patience so that the wrist will have time to heal.

We pray for Charity that you will heal the wound that she has from her back surgery. Lord, please put your healing hand on her and may she know that you are with her during this time of healing and restoration.

We pray for Mary Anne whose husband finally had his heart surgery in Sudbury. May he recuperate fully from this surgery and may they be blessed with a good summer.

We pray for Les Dool and that he would get relief from the shingles that he had in his neck. Do not let him get discouraged, Lord. Assure him that healing will come.

We pray for Jackie and his ongoing health issues. He is doing a little better and really appreciates these prayers for him.

We pray for Noella's son, Guy Thibodeau, who had a massive heart attack. Be with him in his recovery. Give him strength.

Other prayers.

We pray for Carol and her son, Adam, that their relationship would improve so that they could enjoy each others company again.

We pray for Gene and Leona as they look for an apartment. Help them to find something that will meet their needs and also delight them. Be with them in their search.

We pray for Nicole and her 9 year old daughter Hope who face the loss of Bryan who was their husband and father. It will be a difficult summer. Be with them, Lord.

Lastly, Lord, we pray for the churches of St. Paul's and Victoria as they face changes again. May they put their trust in you and experience your presence with them at this time. Amen