

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”*

August 7th, 2022

...We Gather to Worship God...

Responsive Call to Worship: Psalm 136:1-3

Leader: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,

People: For his steadfast love endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the God of gods,

People: For his steadfast love endures forever.

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord of lords,

People: For his steadfast love endures forever.

Let us worship God.

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

Birthday Train: We celebrate one birthday this week: August 10th - Ember Deubel. Happy Birthday to Ember, may Christ bless your day with joy and delight and much love.

Offerings and Tithes: 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: Holy, Holy, Holy

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Opening Prayer of Praise and Confession

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We tend to be consumed more with our own agenda than Yours.

In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

Hear our prayers now as you taught us, saying "Our Father who art in heaven..."

Assurance of Forgiveness – 1John 1:8,9 (in unison page #862)

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

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

Word of God

New Testament: II Peter 3:8-18

Old Testament: Psalm 102:25-27

Hymn: Take time to be Holy

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The Message: "Excuse me, do you have the time"?

Most of you in our Westminster family will know that for the last year plus, during COVID, we introduced praying for people on their birthdays, as a means of connecting with people in our church family whom we were not seeing in person. On Sundays, John or Charlene announce the people with a birthday in the coming week and they pray for them. And, during our Wed. night prayer time on facebook, Charlene prays for the folks again. It means that over the period of a year, every one of us have been recognized and prayed for by our ministers and with our church family. I have found this to be a blessing and am grateful we do not announce the age that accompanies that birthday, just the day on which it occurs.

I will say that on my birthday this year, I turned 69 and I am clutching tightly to this one!! Next year, God Willing, I will happily share the big milestone, that of turning 70. I won't linger any longer now with that thought.

As I age, I find more and more, as I move through my day's activities, I hear myself starting to sound like my Mother, which is OK in that I loved my Mother and she was a fine woman, however what I am hearing is things my Mother would say or do, that would cause me to roll my eyes and give the big heaving sigh accompanied with "oh Mother".

In God's wisdom I do not have a child at my elbow examining and opining over my every move the way I did with my Mom, however I do see in myself similar changes in my thinking and actions, that may just be age related. I am truly reminded that there is nothing new under the sun.

The big one I have experienced more and more is the feeling that everyone seems to be in such a hurry.

It is very annoying at the checkout line in the grocery store or any store for that matter, when the cashier has finished ringing in my goods and is standing looking at me (sometimes sighing), while I am struggling to get my points card and debit card or change put safely back in my wallet.

Sometimes in desperation I just throw it loosely into my purse while jamming in the receipt which she is politely holding out for me while I am trying to deal with my wallet. Then I worry that I must remember to safely and properly put the card or change away as soon as I get to the quiet and private sanctity of my car where I am on MY time, not the clerk's.

And as I am desperately trying to move out of the line gathering up my bags which I was packing myself, as they were my reusable bags which is part of the reason I was not ready to depart the line when the clerk was finished, I smile at the person behind me, who is politely and patiently waiting and I think to myself, I am not in a big hurry. Are you in a hurry? Is the clerk in a hurry? Why are we rushing so. I used to enjoy chatting with the cashier and the people in line and now it is just one big hurried experience and I feel gipped.

Time. How do we look at time. How would we define time?

I do think that the past two years of COVID living threw all of us into a different view of the use of time. For some, it sharpened the lens of valuing time with loved ones. For others, it brought on anxiety wondering if time would ever return to normal and possibly changed priorities of the use of time once restrictions were lifted.

An online dictionary definition describes time as *A nonspatial continuum in which events occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future.*

The word that caught me in that definition is irreversible.

Despite song hits like Cher's "If we could turn back time", we all know that what has taken place up until this moment in time, cannot be undone. We recognize that God is the giver of life and the gift of time, varies for each of us. As Christian people, we are also aware that by the Grace of God demonstrated throughout scripture and in the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are able to confess our sins that we have committed and receive forgiveness. God is the Author of our time on this earth and we have a choice as to what we will do with it.

The scriptures are full of passages that speak to this matter of time or days of our lives.

In Psalm 90, listen to Moses prayer to God acknowledging God as the holder of time.

Ps.90:1-4 and 12

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. 2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. 3 You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." 4 For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.

Vs.12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

I don't think Moses was a hurried man.

Did you know that Moses stayed on the mountain waiting to hear from God for 40 days and nights, not once but twice? Dt.10:10 reads "Now I stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights, as I did the first time, and the Lord listened to me at this time also...."

This passage is a tremendous testimony to the discipline of having time apart to speak to God and to listen to God speak to us. When I first became a Christian, I was taught about the importance of setting aside time daily to have a quiet time or devotional time and I will confess that forty years later, it remains a struggle for me to STOP the hurriedness, to not rush into my day and as the scripture says "Be still and know that I am God".

I do know from experience that when I start my day with a time of quiet before the Lord asking Him to lead me, and praying for His Will to be done, it makes quite a difference to my day. Throughout scripture, we read of men and women who walked closely with God and see their time on earth was used of God to impact their world.

We do have a choice and we see a contrast in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Solomon writes in *Ecclesiastes 2:10-11*, "*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.*" Solomon goes on to call wisdom meaningless, toil and work meaningless, fame and fortune meaningless, and advancement meaningless. For a man who was the wisest to live up to his day, negativity truly permeated his writing.

Talk about the glass not only being half empty but having a big crack in it! God was nowhere mentioned in this lengthy tirade of Solomon's that goes throughout the entire book.

Sadly, some people go through life adopting this same attitude. They see the events of life just going around and around endlessly.

However, at the end of the book in chapter 12: verses 13 and 14 Solomon finally gets it. He writes, "*Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil".

If you have never come to learn of God's Love and His Purpose for your life, which is to glorify Him and tell others of His Love, it is not hard to understand how one ends up with thinking life is meaningless.

We hear clearly about God's true purpose for our lives and the time He gives us, in the prophet Isaiah's description of how God is involved in the events that impact directly on His people's lives.

Listen to Isaiah 61:1-2.

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

Wow, what a contrast in attitude towards life and our time on this earth.

This passage from Isaiah, is a prophecy that Jesus partially quoted as He began His ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth where He grew up. Listen to Jesus's words in *Luke 4:18-19 King James Version (KJV)*

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Jesus lays out His mission which as we know, is the same mission and purposeful life He taught us to follow. It is clear that there will come a time when it will be too late and we must seek the Lord now.

Time and events are moving as we just read in Isaiah 61:1-2 *Now is an acceptable day for those called of God. If we wait, the acceptable day will pass, and the day of vengeance, even now moving toward us, will be here. It will be too late to avoid its destructive powers!*

As I look around the world today, I am acutely aware that the destructive powers are very real. We only need turn on the nightly news to hear of the destructive events that are clearly evil; that destroy human life and dignity.

Like me, you may wonder what impact you can have as you watch this spiraling out of control and can see the end of moral values and goodness in our own communities. How do we as Christian people uphold Biblical Principles and not be shouted down by the evil that seems to get the front page these days?

I believe this aspect of time and what we do with it, is a key component to our Christian witness and the impact that we can have on those around us.

God has given us the gift of life or time, to do something of value with it, to glorify Him. God created us in His Image which means we have characteristics and attributes such that we can bind up the broken hearted and preach the Gospel giving life and hope to those without hope.

I think my grocery store check-out line experience has become symbolic for me. Now when I am shopping, I watch the people moving throughout the store and see that some are very harried with overflowing carts, scanning a list (or hand-held electronic device), with eyes darting as they look at the shelves for their item. Sometimes I see a shorter person trying to reach something on an upper shelf and I stop to say "can I reach that for you?"

Maybe in so doing, I have helped reduce a moment of that person's hurried anxiety.

When I was heading to the check out the other day, a woman approached me with one of those overflowing carts, and a bit of a desperate look on her face. She said to me, "excuse me, do you have the time?"

I knew she was asking about the time of day which I gave her, but as she thanked me and moved on towards the checkout, I wanted to say to her do YOU have the time; time for yourself to take a breather, to be quiet, to hear from a God who loves you.

I silently prayed that for her, Amen.

...We respond in service...

Prayers of the People

Dear Lord, In Psalm 34 your Word says "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles."

Lord we are crying out to you and we need your intervention in our lives. We know you are reliable and you love us. You sacrificed your Son Jesus to be our substitute for the penalty of sin. You have demonstrated your powerful love to us.

God of love, we pray for our church, our community and for ourselves.

We lift up our ministers to you and pray that Revs. John and Charlene have a time of refreshing and restorative rest on their vacation.

We pray for so many around the world facing hardship and tragedy brought on by war and also by natural disasters of flood and fire. Lord please help people to turn to you to find hope and encouragement in all events of life.

We pray that as a church congregation you will show us how to better reflect your love for one another. Show us how to use our material resources and be better stewards to help the economy of our community. Make us mindful of those who have experienced unemployment and hardship.

We pray for those in our church family under strain and stress of health or other concerns, be near, we ask. Give us eyes and ears to see and hear how we can come alongside our brothers and sisters to encourage and support as needed. We ask Lord for patience and confidence in you. Please Lord, keep everyone safe and ready to embrace your mission for our church and ourselves as part of this Westminster Church family. We pray all of this in Jesus's Name, Amen.

Hymn: All the way my Saviour leads me

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Benediction: "The Difference"

I got up early one morning,
and rushed right into the day
I had so much to accomplish,
that I didn't have time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me
and heavier came each task,
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered
He answered, "you did not ask".

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled gray and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me,
He said "but you did not seek".
I tried to come into God's Presence,
I used all my keys at the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided -
"My child, you did not knock".

I woke up early this morning
and paused before entering the day,
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray. - Author unknown

May the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen

Prayers - Wednesday Aug. 3, 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.

Birthdays

Buomkuoth Mawau – who turned 3 years old on August 1! May the Lord bless him and keep him safe and growing in Him!!

Praise

Lord we praise you for your promise of answered prayers. Even when we do not see we know you are at work and we are grateful; thank you for your faithfulness to us Lord.

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 gathered on Saturday to remember and celebrate her life. Betty was a precious and much-loved member of Westminster and we think of Al and all of her family as we remember Betty. Thankyou Lord for her faithful Christian witness.

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 they have made it home safely.

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. Lord, be with her family and give them and Josie's care team wisdom in what are the next steps.

We lift up a young man struggling with depression and feelings of negative self worth. Lord please speak to his heart and mind; we ask that you would heal him and give him insight to know he is loved by you. We pray that he is able to hear Your Spirit speaking truth to him. 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 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 Susan's friend's husband who has cancer. We pray that the treatment he is undergoing is effective and side effects are minimal. Lord we ask for him to know you are the Great Physician and that his hope is in you alone.

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 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.

Lord we lift up our ministers Revs. John and Charlene to you as they begin vacation and study leave for the month of August. Bless them, keep them safe and well in their travels. Lord, touch them with renewal and refreshing of the Holy Spirit that will give them rest and a new energy and vision of their service to you. Bless them Lord, we ask in Jesus Name, Amen.