

**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”*

**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**...We Gather to Worship God...**

**Call to Worship**

We are gathered here not because we have seen fit to choose Christ,

**But because he has looked upon us, and called us to be his own.**

O God, you have searched me and known me, you read my every thought from afar,

**There is not a word on my tongue that you do not know altogether.**

The joy of those who hear the call of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

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

- Board Meeting - Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Choir practice - children's choir at 6:30 and adult choir at 7:30.
- Communion - October 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Thanksgiving. We will again be making gifts for those who are shut-ins. I will again be looking for drivers to help distribute those.

**Birthday Train:** It is Elda Masters' birthday on Saturday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. Many she be blessed with many greetings from her family and friends.

**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](mailto:office@westminsterchurch.ca). We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

**Hymn:** 338 Let all things now living

**Opening Prayer:**

Almighty God, we praise and thank you for making us children of God, not through our own power and piety but through our baptism into crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

We turn daily to you, and in that turning we find peace, courage and purpose.

Make your whole church a witness to the great good news of Christ's resurrection.

God of the risen Jesus, hear our prayer, remind us to pray as you taught your disciples saying ...

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

### Word of God:

New Testament: 1 Peter 2: 9-10, Titus 3:1-7, 8, Galatians 3: 26-29

**Hymn:** 587 Called as partners in Christ's service

### Message:

This morning, we are beginning a series entitled - Enduring the Race: Remembering your baptism. This will be a five part series looking at the titles - remember who you are, remember where you belong, Remember what you are, remember how to live. These titles are coming from Paul's words to Timothy in his second letter. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." This is a statement that we would all like to make I am sure. This series looks at ways that we can make that possible by reflecting on our baptism and gaining hope and assurance from this.

So this week we are looking at remembering who we are. You would think remembering who you are would be easy. We watched Paddington Bear - the movie on Tuesday evening. I had seen it before but it is a delightful movie and there were many funny little things that I had forgotten. I mean how can you not like Paddington Bear. He is a bit bumbley and he does get into some predicaments but you have to love him. Part of Paddington's charm is that he knows who he is. He is Paddington Bear, nephew of Aunt Lucy and Uncle Pastuzo, from deepest, darkest Peru who lives by the motto 'if we are kind and polite, the world will be right'. Though many think that he is lost when he comes to London and rather naive, Paddington is not lost. He came to London for a reason, to emigrate. He was not lost and he manages to make this whole emigration thing work because he knows who he is.

We are told who we are at our baptism. The minister says "John Robert, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. You are now a beloved child of God and part of this new community in Christ." Then we are told to remember our baptism. However, many of us, we were too small to remember that day. I was only six months old when I was baptized. It was on Mother's day in 1964. I obviously do not remember it but there is a photo. It is one of my favourite photos. My mom and I are all dressed up for the occasion and I am being held in my mom's arms as we are coming down the front stairs in the farm house. It has to be my dad taking the picture. He is the one that could get my mom to smile like that even when she was busy. He had a great eye and it was a great picture. I love the picture but I do not remember my baptism. Maybe the question is not 'who am I' as much as it is 'why am I me'. Some of you will remember that Brendan sang a song from the musical 'Shannendoah' which explored this question. I have some young people on my Facebook page and I see them wrestling with this question often. Why am I me? There is always the answer that it would have been easier if they had been someone else. They do not understand why they are who they are. They do not understand how they are going to fulfill the mandate that they are sure they have been given which they think is 'to change the world.'

So it is no wonder that there are a number of people struggling with knowing who they are. I think we all struggle with this at different times in our lives. I know that my answer now would not be quite the same as it was when I was younger. So many things have changed from when I was twenty five to now. How could my answer stay the same? Yet the first part of the answer, our Biblical texts say, should be constant.

God says that there is one answer that stays constant to this question, Who am I? I am a created, beloved Child of God. This does not change. However, our texts from the New Testament letters show us that people need to be reminded of this often in their lives.

The writer of 1 Peter is reminding the readers that, regardless of what they think, they are a chosen people with a high calling to do the work of God. As they became Christians and believing in the death and resurrection of Christ, they became God's special people. At one time they were considered out side the faith because they were not Jewish but now this does not matter. They were once rejected and were nothing but now they are someone and accepted, moved from darkness into the light.

In his letter to Titus, the apostle Paul wants him to remind his congregation that they are to act differently now that they are Christians. They are beloved children of God because God chose them and saved them. They were not chosen because they were so wise and holy. They were to remember that they had lived just like everyone else around them being hated and hating one another because of envy and greed. God chose them because of his love and mercy. They were washed - baptized - into a new life by the Holy Spirit with the old life having been finished. Because God was so loving, kind and merciful to them when they did nothing to deserve it, they were to be humble in their interactions with others. They were to be peaceable and considerate in all their dealings with others. They were to do this because of their new status with God. They were now chosen children living in Christ.

Now to Galatians passage. This was a group of people who had forgotten who they were. I think they were trying very hard to be the Christians that Paul had invited them to be. They had experienced the love of God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am sure that they were in awe that God loved them as well as Jewish people. This God that went beyond the boundaries of various groups of people was somewhat novel. That this God actually cared about the people that He had created and had lived among people would have also been a very wonderful, novel, theological thought. This God cared about his people in a very unique way! However, they then had to figure out how to be 'good' Christians. That has always been the interesting and difficult task has it not? Some thought that they should attempt to live more like the Jewish community and that would bring them closer to God. After all, the Jewish people were God's chosen people. Some went back to including some of their old ways of worshiping and old thoughts about God because they knew that they could never be Jewish enough. They were not born into the right group of people. Either way, they were seeing themselves as second class Christians. Paul was Jewish so he could be a first class Christian but many of the Galatians were not sure where that left them. Paul concludes his thoughts of chapter three with the verses that were read this morning. Very familiar verses to many Christians. "There is no Jew nor Greek,

slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ.”

This is often seen as a social justice statement. It is that of course. However, it is .firstly a theological statement. Firstly, it is everyone has an equal place in Christ. This is not saying that there are no differences. This is saying that there is no hierarchy. The Jewish people are not better Christians than the Greeks because of their birth. The slaves are not better Christians than the free people because of their plight in life. Lastly, men and women have the same opportunity to be in Christ. One is a Christian because a person has found this new way of life which leads to true living not because of birth order or people group or position in life. All are welcome to become a child of God in Christ.

This knowing how you are should, these texts argue, make a difference in your life. As God has been merciful to us offering forgiveness and reconciliation because he cares about us, so we should live doing the same. There are still so many people who need to know who they are, as there was in Jesus’ day. As we learn who we are in Christ, hopefully, others will come to know who they are in Christ as well. Through God’s love, empathy and creativity, we are invited into this community. May we be in awe of what we have and invite others into this life as well.

## **...We Respond in Service...**

### **Prayers of the People:**

**Dearest Lord, Holy Lamb of God,**

Shepherd of the world,

You lead us to respite and relief.

You are our provider and sustainer and through Your providence, we will never want for Your Presence.

You lead us to fields of plenty and You refresh our souls with the cool clear waters of Your spirit.

**Holy Lamb of God,**

You are the Good Shepherd.

We follow You Lord because we know Your voice.

We know that You will lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.

You are Yourself the Gate - we can only come to the Throne of Grace through You.

And You are truly with us—Emmanuel, God with us—so we will not fear evil but be comforted.

You came to give us life and give it to us abundantly.

You have prepared Your table for us and anoint us for service.

Anoint us with Your Holy Spirit: help us to devote ourselves to Your good teachings, to worship, to fellowship and to prayer.

We eat the food that You have given us, both spiritual and physical and You nourish us.

**Holy Lamb of God,**

Today we pray for our sisters and brothers, especially for those who are grieving this day.

We pray for the Royal family as they grieve the loss of their beloved mother, grandmother and

great grandmother. Be with all of us as we grieve the loss of our Queen. May this time of transition go smoothly so that people can continue to live without fear of upheaval.

We pray for the children—those who have started school for the first time and those who have started again.

Be with the teachers, administrators, caretakers and bus drivers - all who are part of the education of these children.

We pray for all of those who live alone, the homebound and the aged.

We pray for those who are absent from us—those who live far away, or are stationed in far places and live in great danger or those who are absent from us even though we share a house with them.

We pray for those who are suffering.

We pray for those who are imprisoned by addiction and disease.

### **Holy Lamb of 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.

All of us are like sheep who have gone astray—we have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

Forgive us and free us for joyful obedience.

Help us to follow the example of Christ.

He left his petitions in the hands of God, who always judges mercifully, kindly and fairly.

Help us to rejoice that we have been healed by His wounds and we are now considered your children.

Once we were wandering like lost sheep, but now we have turned to Your Shepherd, the Guardian of our souls.

All we can say is thank You and pray that Your goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives.

These things we pray in the name of your Son, the Holy Lamb of God,

Amen

**Hymn:** 482 Christ is made the sure foundation

## **Benediction**

### **Prayers - Wednesday September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

*Romans 12:12 says... "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer".*

### **Praise**

For Grayson whose cancer treatment is scheduled to be finished on September 11<sup>th</sup>!

For a family relationship that has been restored after being broken for a year. Some of you will remember that we prayed about this last fall.

## **Prayers**

On the first day of school, 2022

God of all knowledge, we rejoice that you draw children and young people into communities of learning and communities of friendship. We thank you for the role education plays in the lives of youth and in the life of our communities.

On the first day of school, O Lord, we pray for students beginning a new school year. We remember those who are starting school for the first time, those who are attending a new school. O God who walks with all people, we remember those who are looking forward to the start of school and those who are worried.

O God who sees everyone, we remember those for whom school is a place where they are recognized and applauded and those for whom school is a place where they are ignored and overlooked.

O God who gifts all people, we pray that this year all students will find something in school that interests them, something into which they can put their energy and excitement. Give each of them something to care about, engaged with, excited by.

We bring before you teachers, administrators, school staff, bus drivers – that they will know joy in the high privilege that is theirs to teach young people knowledge, understanding, and how to be members of a community. Give them skill and patience, O Lord, insight and the ability to explain. Use them, by your grace, to show care and compassion to students, parents, and other another.

We bring before you parents, grandparents, guardians – that they would be given courage and peace as they watch their children go to school. Give them the insight to support their children's learning, O Lord, so that home and school might function well together.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who grew in wisdom and knowledge as he grew up from being an infant to being an adult. Amen.

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

We pray for Dennis, Susan's friend and continue to lift him up before you for a good response to the treatment in extending his life.

We pray for Grayson who is finishing his cancer journey. May he be excited about his life beyond treatment. We pray for Charlotte has her cancer journey continues. Give her and her family strength and courage.

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.

We pray for Sharon's friend, Patsy who has only one more cancer treatment to do. That must bring excitement and relief.

We pray for Les Dool as he is now facing a diagnosis of cancer. Be with his and his family as they find out what the new diagnosis means. Give them strength, give them courage and be with them.

We continue to pray for Carl Meierhoff who is facing treatments for cancer. Be with him as he goes through this journey.

We pray for a friend of mine whose cancer has returned and has to face treatment again. May the treatments be successful and may he be able to continue in his work.

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

### **Other Prayers**

We pray for Ursula Hagen who is in hospital. Be with her and her family as she needs to move to a nursing home that provides more care for her. This will be a big change for her and Reagan.

We pray for Beth's father-in-law who is dealing with Alzheimers and end of life issues. We ask for comfort for him and his wife and all of the family at this time.

We pray for Chris Deubel who is traveling to Toronto with the Sault College Baseball team. May he enjoy his time getting to know the team and playing a sport he loves. May the team travel safely to Toronto and back. Be with them, Lord.

We pray for Adam who should be heading back to school but is having great difficulty doing that. Lord, we pray that Adam would try returning to school and that he receives help for his ADHD.

We pray for Susan Edward's cousin, Marina, who lost her husband to Parkinson's disease today. Be with her as she takes care of herself in her grief and her two daughters who are still young. Lord, be with them and comfort them. Give them strength and courage to get through the next few days and weeks.

We pray for Susan's cousin, Bev, who is experiencing excruciating pain from two compressed fractures in her spine after a fall. This has continued for three weeks and she is very tired from the pain. Lord, we pray that Bev gets relief from her pain and experiences your healing touch.

We pray for Karli Dionisi's aunt, Holly Davis who had a stroke late July and has a long recovery ahead of her. Lord, give her strength and determination to do the physiotherapy. Give everyone patience as they wait to see what she is able to do. We pray for healing for her.

We pray for Charity who is still healing from surgery that happened before the summer. Be with her, Lord, as she still has pain from the wound and healing is slow. Give her patience as she waits for the healing to be complete. Lord, give her support and help as she waits.

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 who has moved into the Great Northern Retirement home and seems to be enjoying this transition. Be with her son, Guy Thibodeau, as he continues to recover from a heart attack and surgery. Be with him in his recovery. May he be aware of your presence Lord as he seeks you. Just a note - the daughter is so thankful for this prayer group who have been praying for her mother and brother.

We pray for my son, Brendan, as he recovers from a broken bone in his foot. Lord, may he heal quickly. May he be patient with his crutches and with the time he has off work.

We pray for Linda's son who is going to have more surgery on his shoulder. Be with him as doctors decide what the next step is for his healing.

For Debbie and Neal Mathers as they support their daughter, Irene. Tests are being done to figure out a diagnosis and it is difficult to wait and worry about what she might be dealing with. Lord, be with them in their fears and worries. Give them strength and courage.

We pray for Pam Dearing and her husband, Ron, who are recuperating from covid and summer holidays. Be with them as they recover and may they get the rest that they need so that they can again resume their regular activities.

We pray for Joan Marshall who has covid. May she recuperate quickly and have no long lasting effects.

We pray for Susan's brother who is turning 80 next month and sister-in-law who have received notice that they must leave their condo rental by October 31. Lord, be with them as they look. It is a very tight rental market and they are having a difficult time finding somewhere to live. Lord, please provide a home for them. They are feeling very stressed about this situation.

We pray for those who are waiting for surgery. Apparently they are told it will be soon but with staffing shortages and back logs dates cannot be given. So people are waiting but not knowing when specifically and this makes the waiting stressful. Be with them, Lord, as they wait. May they find peace and strength in you.

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.