

**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 18th, 2022

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship: Psalm 16:5-11

Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

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

- Choir practice - Thursday evening - children's choir at 6:30 and adult choir at 7:30.
- Communion - October 2nd.
- Thanksgiving. We will again be making gifts for those who are shut-ins. Charlene will again be looking for drivers to help distribute those.

Birthday Prayer Train: We have one Birthday Train member this week and that is Joan Hall. Her birthday is on September 23rd! Happy Birthday to Joan who is moving to Ottawa soon to be closer to family. It is their gain and our loss. We will miss you Joan and we send you with our blessings and our love.

Offerings and Tithes: Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry. Contributions may be made in person or by mail. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: God of grace and God of glory

490

Opening Prayer of Adoration and Confession

O Lord, our God, we praise you this morning for the beauty of Your creation that we can see, and for the majesty of your creation that is beyond our present awareness. O God, you are our God and you are worthy of our praise, indeed Loving Lord you are worthy of all our praises! May Your Name be glorified in this church, in our households and in every part of our being. May Your Name be glorified in this city, country and world. We long for the day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Your Son Jesus is Lord and all glory will finally be Yours.

O Lord, today we lift up to you our prayers of confession so that we may be renewed and restored as your church. O Lord, it is Your will that all your children should be one in Christ; we pray for the unity of Your church. Pardon all our pride and our lack of faith, of understanding and of love, which are the causes of our divisions.

Deliver us from our worldly thinking; from our bitterness; from our prejudices. Save us from considering as normal what is an offense to Your love. Teach us to recognize the gifts of grace among all those who call upon you and confess the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. We pray this in the strong name of Jesus, who taught us when we pray to say: Our Father, who art in heaven.....Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Christ is our Peace; those who are divided he has made one. He has broken down the barriers of separation by his death and has built us up into one body with God. To all who repent and believe on the saving grace of Jesus he has promised reconciliation. So let us all live as people reconciled.

Musical Presentation

Peter Scoffield

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

Word of God:

New Testament: 1st Corinthians 12:12-17; Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16, 32-5:2

Hymn: We are one in the Spirit

471

Message

Making your way in the world today
Takes everything you've got
Taking a break from all your worries
Sure would help a lot
Wouldn't you like to get away?
Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your name
And they're always glad you came
You want to be where you can see
Our troubles are all the same
You want to be where everybody knows your name (Cheers theme)

Back before TV had been overtaken by mind numbing reality TV shows my generations' ideologies were centred around our Thursday evening TV viewing. Cheers was a top favourite and it focused around an eclectic group of individuals and the comedy of relationships among them. The theme of belongingwe all watched it, it was a part of our generations ethos...in fact Thursday evenings were required viewing for Friday high school discussions of Cheers, Seinfeld, Friends, Mad about you.

One glaring problem with Cheers and the other sit coms....fundamentally different from the gospel's understanding of community that I have only recognized in hindsight and with the wisdom of age is this....we, in Christ are expected to change in response to the love of Christ...none of the sit com writers wanted anyone fundamental dysfunctions to change. That would end the series if they grew from their dysfunctions because of belonging together. If you remember how Seinfeld ended ...the jury finds Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer guilty of criminal indifference, and the judge sentences them to a year in prison. While awaiting their prison transport, Kramer finally gets the water out of his ears. It purposely ended with an acknowledgment of the permanent dysfunction in their basic humanity.

Baptism in community reminds us of two things, that we belong and that we **need to belong**. We were created to be a part of a community in Christ. The triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in its “three-in-oneness” is the ultimate expression of community....and we are created in God's image. Male and female, we are created in God's image. Genesis 1 says, “Let us make humankind in ***our*** image, in **our** likeness”....it doesn't say, “Let me make humankind in **my** image.” From before the foundation of this earth we were created to be in relationship with others, to live in community. Also in Genesis is the statement by God “that it is not good that the man should be alone”. We were created to be in relationship with others, to live in community. If you Google “the importance of belonging”, you will find many scientific studies to backup what we intuitively know and what scripture has long maintained...we need one another.

However, despite being residents of a Western society that prides itself in its connectedness through LinkedIn accounts and Facebook friends, we are desperately lonely. And there are studies that support that too with ominous phrases like “loneliness epidemic”. Much of our present individual and societal dislocations can be traced back to a crushing sense of loneliness that is all around us.

Loved ones, the good news of the gospel of Christ is that we do belong—”body and soul, in life and in death—to our faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Heidelberg Catechism). And following the logic and the truth taught by Scripture, if I am united with Christ, and you too are united with Christ, then we are united together. For sure, in our baptisms we become part of a community of believers. We belong. This is good news indeed!

And according to Paul we belong, all of us, in a unique and important way in every church community. We belong to the extent that if we are personally missing from the fellowship, then everyone else is lacking in their full potential because we are not there. And of utmost

importance, the mission of Christ is also lacking its fullness. I will go so far to also say that it matters that we are here praising God today on the level of spiritual warfare against the spirits of chaos and despair in the communities in which we live.

I believe it is also helpful to state that often in Scripture the “belonging” happens before the “knowing”. “Zaccheus come down from that tree because tonight I am having supper at your place”...Zaccheus’ affirmation of faith came after Jesus had come into fellowship with him. Jesus invites people in, talks with them, and loves them *before* they make any profession of faith. This is important for how we as believers function and how we treat those who are not yet believers. It is also one of the truths supporting infant baptism. Remember we were loved before we were loveable, we were accepted before we were respectable and empowered before we were responsible. There is strong support in both testaments for our covenant theology, that God’s provision is not just individual it is familial...God’s covenant has been with families all along. God loves us first; our profession of faith is in response to that reality.

And finally for today I’ll return to the second part of today’s theme about belonging together...that in our being in Christ and in our belonging together we are to grow...we are to be changed from who we were before Christ to who we are to become in Christ. We grow best when we are together. When we are there for each other, when we encourage one another, exhort one another, pray for one another...we grow! The gathering together of Christ’s people in community allows us to grow stronger in our faith. Now I know there are days....! The enemy is always at work to disrupt and derail the ties that binds us together. We ourselves, occasionally, sometimes, allegedly, get up on the wrong side of the bed...but there are more days when the Spirit of Christ moves among us and we become more, much more, than who we would be alone. Those good times together when we can all agree that “God in fact has placed the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” Paul’s message in Ephesians 4 that we are to build one another up in the body to equip each other for works of service, “so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”.

The late Bishop Fulton Sheen once entered a greasy-spoon restaurant for breakfast, and when the waitress, groggy and disinterested, took his order, he replied, “Bring me some bacon and eggs and a few kind words.” When she returned 15 minutes later, she set the food before him and said, “There.”

“What about the kind words?”

The server looked him over a moment, then replied, “I’d advise you not to eat them eggs!”

Although it may not be what we expect to hear, we all need kind and encouraging words from time to time. For certain, Scripture is a great source of encouragement for us as Christians, and that is one of the many reasons why regular Bible reading and study is essential to our maturation into Christ likeness.to know the continual love of our Heavenly Father.

But next to Scripture, however, the greatest words we can receive are encouraging ones from a fellow believer, someone who has been where you are now, someone empathetic and sympathetic with your plight. Often have I received just the encouragement I needed from someone who spoke words of life to me, or sometimes just came near to be with me.

Jim Burns, in his book *The Youth Builder*, said, “For every critical comment we receive, it takes nine affirming comments to even out the negative effect in our life.”

We need to belong. We belong in Christ. We also belong to each other and in our belonging we are built up, we grow in our faith, we lift each other up and we counter the many negative forces of this world. It is important that we belong, and it is important to Christ’s mission that we are here together. May the Spirit of Christ bind us together even more and grow us into his loving community for his names’ sake. Amen.

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People

Pastoral Prayer for healing broken relationships

Dear heavenly Father, because we want to go forward in strength in Christ, and strength in your gift to us of each other, hear our prayer for healing from any broken relationships among us, or in our past, that have too long festered in silence.

Father, we've been hurting too long. There's too much silence, Too much pain. Won't you help us?

Won't you heal us? Let us let go,

Of trying to figure things out. Let us let go,

Of thinking who's right or wrong.

Instead let us feel Christ embracing us. Let us be better with each other.

Let us find a common ground, where love heals all wounds.

Soften our hearts, oh Father.

Let us follow the example of your Son.

Who does not seek control, but instead loving sacrifice, and acceptance.

This is the source of his glory.

Born of mercy and trust, in God Almighty.

Let us trust that you can heal.

Let us trust that we can change,

Bring us to you. Bring us together again,

For we know that, by your sweet mercy, All things are possible.

In Jesus name, Amen.

(prayerforanxiety.com)

Hymn: Brother, sister let me serve you

635

Benediction

Prayers - Wednesday September 14th, 2022

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

Birthdays

Susan Edwards' birthday was on Sunday and Elda Masters' birthday is on Saturday. Lord we are thankful for Susan and Elda' presence among us in our congregation. Bless them this week as they are celebrated for who they are and who they have become.

Praise

Sharon's friend, Patsy, has had her last cancer treatment and she is so grateful for all of the prayers. She is feeling so much better now, really feeling well. That is so great to hear.

Susan's brother and sister-in-law have a condo! A brand new condo for Oct. 17th. So they will have time to move their things to the new place and be out of their old place by Oct. 31st. Such good news.

Susan's friend's husband, Dennis is responding really well to his chemotherapy and the cancer has not spread and has been suppressed for now. He will just be on immunotherapy for the next little while. We will continue to pray for him but this is some very good news in the middle of his journey with cancer..

Prayers

Lord, we begin our prayers this evening praying for those who are grieving. We pray for the Royal Family as they have a very long week of protocols that must be fulfilled while they are coming to terms with the loss that they have experienced. Be with them as they prepare for the very public funeral on Monday.

Be with those who are grieving the loss of Carl Meierhoff (from our congregation). He was a well loved gentleman who will be greatly missed.

We pray for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one to Covid. Apparently, there have been five more people lost to this virus this week in the Sault. Be with those, Lord, who mourn and may they find comfort in you.

We pray for those who have found themselves in another Covid outbreak with rules that are not as clear as they used to be about what to do. Be with those, Lord, who are sick and those who are recovering. May they know your healing hand on them. Be with those who are fearful again as

these statistics start to climb again. Help them deal with their fear and anxiety and may they place their hope in You, Lord.

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

We pray for Susan and Michael's friend, David, who has been diagnosed with cancer and given four months to live. Lord, we pray that you will be with the family of David as they take in this news. May they find ways to live and enjoy each other's company even with this diagnosis being part of their lives. Be with them, Lord, and we pray for healing.

We pray for Charlotte as 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 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 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.

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 Penny's cousin, Peter, who has pneumonia. It was thought that he had something far worse than this and the family is grateful that it is pneumonia which is treatable. He is, however, very sick with pneumonia and it will take some time to recover because of his compromised lungs. Lord, we pray that you would heal Peter and that he would quickly start to regain his strength. (since the prayer night, Peter has passed away so I would ask that you pray for the family as they grieve the loss of this special family member).

We pray for Joan Hall as she prepares to move to Ottawa with her family next Thursday. Lord, we pray that this transition will go well for Joan. May she gain the support and help that she did not have when she was living alone. May she truly enjoy being close to family again.

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 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.

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 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.

Other prayers.

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.