

Dear Friends of Wesley and St James and beyond

(I say beyond, as I know this is going to go eventually to some Nova Scotian churches who are eager for resources , and who knows where else?)

This week, I surprised myself and perhaps you by loading the whole service onto Facebook. If you want to hear the music and see and hear me doing the non-musical parts of the service live, it's all on the Church FB page more or less in the right order . Wesley and St James United, St Andrews/Oak Hill/Scotch Ridge. If you're not sure how to get there, go visit our church website , <https://wesleyunitedchurchstandrewsbytheseanb.ca/> , scroll down the right of the home page and you'll see a Facebook post- click on it and you will wind up on the right Facebook page and you are off and running. You don't have to be a regular Facebook user to do this . <https://www.facebook.com/Wesley-and-St-James-United-St-AndrewsOak-HillScotch-Ridge-119723314755888/>

If you'd rather just read it or share it with someone who would rather just read it, please find the transcript, with links to the music, below. I'm sorry that not all of you were able to open the links last week, and alas, I don't have the expertise to tell you what to do about that! Maybe some younger techie relative can help you over the phone!

The one thing NOT on the Fb page is a link to Friday's Virtual Coffee Shop- 10-11 a.m. , where you can visit me and each other via Zoom

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8925717799> Meeting ID: 892 571 7799

Blessings to all and please stay in touch!

Jane

Sunday Home Worship for Wesley and St James, March 29, 2020

Gathering Music. " Sanctuary" by Carrie Newcomer

<https://youtu.be/9Mh3NS7sodl>

Call into Awareness of Divine Presence From Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you. O God hear my cry!

Let your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy

I wait for you, God; my soul waits, and in your word is my hope.

My soul waits for God more than the watchers long for morning.

O my people, wait in hope; trust in unfailing Love.

Opening Reflection

In these days, we have lost control of much.

Our schedules have gone out the window.

The calendar means nothing.

We cannot plan next week or next month.

Holy Week and Easter are coming soon- but how will we mark them?

All we can do is wait in hope-

Yes, and trust in love.

And remember - there have been other broken times,

Where the old ways, the known ways were missing,

Where God's people could not be together as they once were,

And did not know how long this time of exile would go,

And after so much time apart,

How would they learn to be together again.

So much we do not know.

So much we cannot see.

And even if we can get a glimpse of the world beyond the confines of self-isolation,

What do we make of it all,

What do we do with it all?

Holy One, as we sit still in this in-between place, we ask , “How Long?” And receive no answer. We miss loved ones beyond our province, beyond our country- even those loved ones in households we cannot enter. We are still learning to live this a day at a time. We are still learning the lesson of an unchosen Sabbath. Even with all we have yet to know, yet to learn, yet to see, we know we need trust, and courage, and a sense of inner sanctuary, deep peace, light within the shadows. May we open our hearts to all we most deeply need, knowing that your Spirit prays the words we do not know how to pray, knowing that your Love is never distant, no matter how distant we may be from each other. May it be so!

Readings from Ancient and Modern Wisdom

Ezekiel. 37 1-14 The Valley of the Dry Bones

The hand of God came upon me and brought me out by the Spirit and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. God led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. God said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ I answered, ‘O God, you know.’ Then God said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of God. Thus says God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.’

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then God said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’ I prophesied as God commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then God said to me, ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.” Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am your God , when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, your God, have spoken and will act.

Narrative Theology #1 by Padraig O Tuama [From readings from the book of Exile]

And I said to him:
Are there answers to all of this?
And he said:
The answer is in a story
And the story is being told.

And I said:
But there is so much pain.
And she answered, plainly:
Pain will happen.

Then I said:
Will I ever find meaning?
And they said:
You will find meaning.
Where you give meaning.

The answer is in a story
And the story isn't finished.

Reflection

Ezekiel knew a thing or two about exile - as the story goes he was exiled from his homeland to Babylon. He was just one of many Israelites dispersed, scattered, forced to sing their songs in a strange land. His prophecies and his telling of his own story are filled with intense emotion- anger, sorrow, discouragement, you name it.

Not surprising- when your home and community are taken away, when you are deposited in a foreign land against your will, you're going to be very upset- to say the least. More than upset. Disoriented! Who are you when you lose everything that gives your life shape, and identity?

And confused about where this is all going- Will you ever get any of it back? Will you ever be at home again?

Now you and I might seem to have the opposite problem. Right? Our problem is that we can't be or shouldn't be anywhere but home. We like our homes- we know we are lucky to have them, especially now. But we aren't used to being there 24/7 by ourselves, or, with just our own household, no one else coming in, no other house to visit. We are wondering-when do we get to be anywhere but home? When do we get out of here?

We are lucky to have our homes- to be in the places we know. And yet, we are not totally at home even in our familiar space. We are displaced in time- it's not the time we know. Our schedules have been wiped out. Our social activities- even, for some, our jobs have disappeared. Our public spaces are mostly under lock and key- even the playground is off limits now.

And already some of our Easter plans are going up in smoke, As many of you realize you can't go see your family and they can't come and see you.

And of course, we all want to know- how long is this going to go on for? When do we get to go out again in a normal way?

All we know right now- it's going on longer than the initial 2 weeks. Our Regional United Church Executive Minister has just asked us to keep all church buildings closed until the end of April, and continue to avoid any in-person gatherings, even visits. definitely no weddings, no funerals, no hospital or care home visits

And our governments, town, province, and nation, are giving us the same message - keep staying home as much as possible, don't let up.

I probably find this easier than most of you as I can work from home, and I am quite a loner- but even for me, this is starting to feel like a long haul. And I am concerned for each one of you, knowing there are lonely, anxious moments for many of us, knowing the news can be overwhelming, knowing that for many it's our routines, our activities, our social times that support our mental and emotional health

And with that knowing, I also feel the depth of un-knowing- How long? What will happen? Will we and our loved ones be OK? And when this phase is over, who will we be then, how will life be then? Not, I think, the same as before.

So, yes, we can take some inspiration from Ezekiel- especially today's story. The Spirit, the Wind, blows him into a strange place- where everything has come to a dead stop, literally. How to bring it all back to life again? How to put individual people back together again? How to put the community back together again?

Do you wonder too - after keeping away from people, trying not to go out, trying to stay away from germs that may lurk within strangers or friends, having no accustomed patterns of social interaction - not just when will we come back to life again, But how?

Well, Ezekiel finds out that it's up to him- well, up to him and God. God needs him to help put people and community back together, to help bring them back to life, To help resurrection happen.

This scripture is the one read all over the world on this 5th Sunday of Lent in lectionary year. It's read alongside the raising of Lazarus- Jesus raising him up from the grave- A sign of more resurrection to come- which is the Easter story.

So where does this leave us, as we keep staying at home, keep waiting this pandemic out till it's safe to step back into normal life?

Perhaps, even if we are far enough away that we can't breathe germs on each other, we can still send Love, down the phone lines, over the Internet- donating as we can to church and Open Door and volunteer centre, or to individuals in need, keeping our prayers going- many need to be held in Love and Light- compassion needs to flow through us out into the world.

I see Love in Action- In many back and forth emails and a few phone calls, In a Zoom meeting the wonders of technology - with my Wild Mercy study groups- In deliveries I've received thanks to generous volunteers who are keeping the likes of me safe/ In phone calls being made to vulnerable sector people to be sure they are safe,

And, yes, in the hard work of governments, , party politics mostly set aside. The hard work of medical officers and health care workers

And so many showing love by staying home, trying our best to keep as many healthy and safe as possible.

Love also shines through many gifts of prayer and meditation and music and story online, Some shared with me, some I've shared.

As the Irish poet O'Tuama reminds us,

"The answer is in the story -The story is still being told". "Yes, there is pain", we know there is and will be pain - But we help to "give the meaning as we do our part in the story."

"The story is still being told"- this story of a strange exile in place, an exile from the time and ways we know. It is not finished

And you and I and the beloved community and many all over the world are part of the writing of it- always guided by Holy Wisdom ,always embraced by God's Compassion, trusting still in Resurrection, and truly - even when by ourselves- never alone. Thanks be to God!

Music VU 619 Healer of Our Every Ill by Marty Haugen.

<https://youtu.be/hwBewCxunL0>

Offertory

see Treasurer's Message at the end of this order of service. Meanwhile, pray this as a commitment to offer whatever and however you can, including especially, the gift of who you are. <https://wesleyunitedchurchstandrewsbytheseanb.ca/a-treasurers-moment/>

As the Spirit speaks through us to the dry bones, may we hear the message- may we speak words of life in our living and our giving. May our gifts and our lives be generous, that all may know abundance. May we all choose a healing path, to mend what has been broken, to begin again as beloved community. May it be so!

Prayer for Entering this Week by Janice MacLean <https://prayerbench.ca>

Be still and lean,
lean back into the Love
flowing.
Trust the flow to hold you.
Lean back
and drop your shoulders,
loosen your jaw,
relax the tightness round your heart.
Breathe.
Be. Here. Now.
For this moment ...
Let each decision go –

Resist each urgency –
Welcome the little deaths and
the "normals" that aren't.
Be still and lean.
Each letting go,
Each accepting thought
Each welcoming of now
brings closer
this moment
ripe and holding
everything we need.

And now in a moment of silence, we rest in that Love that holds us and we send that Love out to all who are in our hearts and all who need our prayers-
These and all our prayers we gather into the prayer we share with beloved community around the world and across the ages: Our Father

Announcements

Blessing

Let us go forth filled with hope for new life, peace in believing, energy for healing and compassion for befriending.
May we know and share the blessing of God who loves this world, who turns weeping into rejoicing , and breathes into places of death, that new life may be born in our midst. Amen.

Music for Going Forth

“Nothing can trouble”. words of St Teresa of Avila.
A version of this at VU 290

“Nothing can trouble. Nothing can frighten.
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble, Nothing can frighten .
God alone fills us”

followed by the Spanish original.

Music by Jacques Berthier [Taize community]

https://youtu.be/bEJqVAy_TXQ

Wed. at 7 p.m. Wesley board will meet via Zoom

Thurs. 2:30- 4 Wild Mercy will meet via Zoom

Friday 10 a.m. - 11 Jane's Virtual Coffee Shop- Drop in via Zoom. <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8925717799>

Meeting ID: 892 571 7799 If you are interested in attending, and want a reminder, email Jane .
She can also send you a How to Join Zoom video if this is new to you

Sunday April 5- Palm Sunday- format TBC but you will receive something!

A message from Barb if you are wondering about how to continue supporting your church in this time:
<https://wesleyunitedchurchstandrewsbytheseanb.ca/a-treasurers-moment/>

Open Door request - <https://www.facebook.com/theopendoorprogram/> are in need of your support also.

Finally, please check our website often , where we are sharing COVID-19 updates as often as possible, including a link to the Town of St Andrews site which is very informative.

<https://wesleyunitedchurchstandrewsbytheseanb.ca/covid-19-updates/>
<https://www.townofsaintandrews.ca/> <https://www.facebook.com/town.saintandrews/>