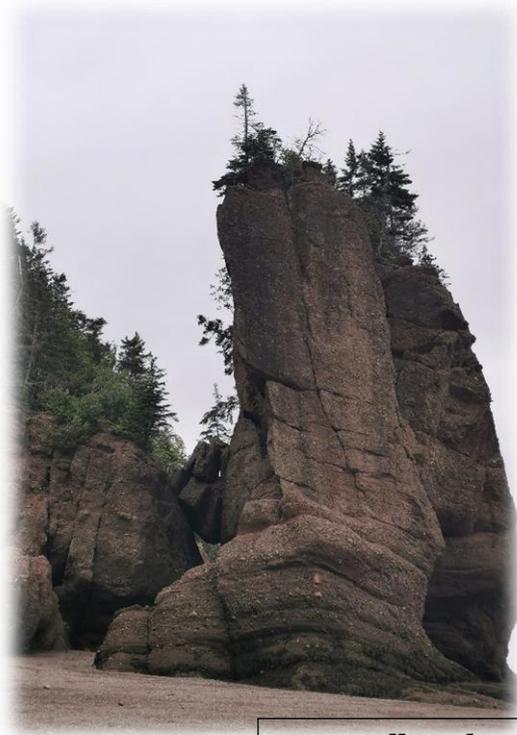


Home Worship Service July 26, 2020



Hopewell Rocks, Hopewell Cape, New Brunswick

Welcoming the Light

Watch the first 34 seconds and hit pause:

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ess05.sci.ess.eiu.riseset/observe-sunrise-and-sunset/>

As we come to greet the day,
we see the sunrise,
filling us with hope for new horizons,
and lighting our way in this day.

Song for Centring:

MV40 Deep in Our Hearts
<https://youtu.be/wBdTZKVfMhM>

Gathering Words:

adapted from Westminster United Church (Medicine Hat)'s April 26, 2015 bulletin

We gather now in this space,
a space that transcends walls and windows.
We enter a space to learn and grow,
a space to try new things,
a space to pass on our story,
a space to connect with nature,
a space to forgive and forget,
a space to be still and listen,
a space to build community,
a space to connect with God,
a space to just be welcome to worship.

Readings from Our Tradition

Genesis 1:1-11 (NRSV) "The Waters of Creation"

In the beginning when God created^[a] the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^[b] swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so.

"Song of the Sea" (paraphrased from Exodus 15:1-18)

"I will sing to the One, whom I raise up high.
God, you are my strength and my song and my salvation.

I will praise the God of my ancestors.
Pharaoh's chariots and his army have been hurled into the sea;
the best of his officers drowned in the Red Sea.
The deep waters have covered them as they sank to the depths like a stone.

By the blast of your nostrils, the water piled up, standing firm like a wall.
The deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.

Although the enemy boasted of great power and predicted great victory,
you blew your breath, and the sea covered them.

With unfailing love, you will lead the people you have redeemed.
In your strength, you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

My God shall reign for ever and ever."

Reading from Our World: read by Ali

"Miriam's Song" by Debbie Friedman (based on Exodus 15:20-210)

And Miriam was a weaver of unique variety.
The tapestry she wove was one which sang our history.
With every thread and every strand, she crafted her delight.
A woman touched with spirit, she dances toward the light.

*And the women dancing with their timbrels,
followed Miriam as she sang her song.
Sing a song to the One whom we've exalted.
Miriam and the women danced and danced the whole night long.*

As Miriam stood upon the shores and gazed across the sea,
the wonder of the miracle she soon came to believe.
Whoever thought the sea would part with an outstretched hand.
And we would pass to freedom and march to the promised land.

And Miriam the Prophet took her timbrel in her hand.
And all the women followed her just as she had planned.
And Miriam raised her voice with song. She sang with praise and might,
"We've just lived through a miracle; we're going to dance tonight."

Song for Preparing:

MV144 Like a Healing Stream

https://youtu.be/lPR1r4o_qU

Reflection by Ali:

“Celebrating the Depths of the Sea”

Introduction

I've got to confess;

I am sad that our time spent together at the seashore is coming to an end.

I have thoroughly enjoyed exploring our faith together in this way,
with these stories and these images.

As I told you during our first Sunday together,

I really love the ocean.

I grew up on it

and I am still completely enthralled by it.

I think, though, while everyone enjoys a walk on the beach

or the cool breeze on a hot summer's day,

we sometimes forget just how important the sea is.

I read a quote this week that puts that into perspective.

It was in an article on the World Economic Forum.

It said,

“Without healthy oceans, our life on Earth would be
severely challenged, unpleasant and perhaps impossible.

The oceans are the life support system of all living beings.

That's because life on Earth can thrive without land,

but it cannot exist without an ocean.” (Gregory Stone – 9 Nov 2016)

We know that our oceans are teeming

with more creatures than we will ever discover.

We also know that it is harder to get to the depths of the ocean

than it is to deep space -

although many will keep trying.

The sea remains a great mystery to us

and, rightly, it fills us with wonder.

This, my friends, has not changed.

Since the beginning of time,

the sea has been seen as mystical and holy.

Parting of the Red Sea

This was certainly true for Moses and Miriam.

Today, we heard from both of them

as we re-visited the Book of Exodus,

following the parting of the Red Sea.

Moses sings with great respect his “Song of the Sea”,

offering thanks for its cooperation.

Miriam dances as an offering of praise

for the great gesture of the waters.

This is such a great story of our faith.

But, again, I am not so much struck by the traditional miracle

as we find it in the text.

Yes, of course, there's this epic battle

between Pharaoh's army and the Israelites,

with the underdog coming out on top -

with a little help from Mother Nature, of course.

But I am actually drawn more to the episode that follows.
For I feel it delivers a message that perhaps we need to hear.

It is undoubtedly a story of great celebration.

Singing and Dancing

Moses and Miriam have spent their lives working incredibly hard.

1. They were prophets,
who passed on wisdom that came from their own contemplation.
2. They were justice fighters,
speaking up for what was right despite grave consequences.
3. And they were leaders,
ushering an entire race of people out of slavery and into freedom.

And the climax comes, of course,
with the symbolic separation of the waters,
which forge a clear path to a new life.

But afterward, the work will continue.

1. Next, Miriam and Moses will have to be visionaries,
rebuilding an entire society.
2. They will be guides,
showing people to the Promised Land.
3. That will come after all the counselling and reassuring
they will do to a nomadic people,
suffering loudly for generations,
as they find themselves
in a painful place of transition
in the hot desert.

There is so much to be done. . . always.
Listing it all makes me tired.

But in this moment,
Miriam and Moses put that all aside.
And they sing and they dance
and they play the timbrel,
which is just a funky ancient tambourine.

For one night, the work stops.

They put down their staffs and kick off their sandals.
They don't worry about stone tablets or manna or quail.
Here, at the entrance to the endless desert, they party.
They draw the circle wide,
inviting everyone in,
so that all may feel joy.

The Israelites continue to stand in awe of the waters
that allowed them to pass.
They don't try to understand it.
They don't need to explain it.

They just let themselves feel amazed
and to feel God –
God in the water,
God in the freedom,
God in the community that surrounds them now
and the same community that will continue the journey with them later.
Thankful, they are, that they do not have to go it alone.

They allow themselves to simply be.

Celebrating Like the Creator

Sometimes we forget that part, don't you think?

As Christians, we are eager to do the work.

We talk a lot about helping people move their nets
so they might find what they need.

We talk a lot about reflecting on the light
so we might discern what we need to do next.

We prepare ourselves to be the feet and hands of Jesus,
performing our own sorts of miracles in the world.

But we ought to also talk about
putting all that aside -
for one night as it were -
and to feel pure joy -
where our toes can't help but tap
and we channel the songs of seabirds,
lacking any ounce of self-consciousness.

We find ourselves in the United Church.
Rightly or wrongly,
it has been called "Thinking Person's Church".
We have also prided ourselves in being the "Justice Church".
We think, we reach out, we help, we work.

But we mustn't forget that:

1. On the first day, God swept over the face of the waters
and separated the light from the darkness.
2. On the second day, God separated one set of waters from the next,
creating sky.
3. On the third day, God came up with the oceans.
4. On the fourth day, God did some other cool stuff...
and on it went.

But then came Day 7, the party day.
Oh sure, we always say, God *rested*,
but what was that really about?
It was about God celebrating.

This character of the Creator
just spent that day marvelling at creation –
sitting by the seashore –
having some Tall Tom's lemonade
and saying, "Wow. That is beautiful!"

God just stopped,
like Moses,
like Miriam,
like the Israelites.
Stopped . . .
and saw a good thing
and stood in awe of its majesty.

Conclusion

So, let's do that for a little while.

Today, I don't need you to do anything.

I don't need you to help anyone.

I don't need to ponder, to challenge, or to be challenged.

I just need you to be.

The ocean is calling to us.

It is saying,

1. "Come to me, O weary one,
and I will give you rest."
2. "Come, sit in the sand
and watch the roll of the sea."
3. "Feel the smooth faces of the stones,
just as you feel the salt spray on your face."

So, let yourself be drawn into the depths of the sea.

Let yourself feel gratitude,

as if the waves are parting just for you.

For when we do this,

we allow ourselves to be immersed into the presence of God.

And that is an experience that is very difficult to explain –

and perhaps doesn't need an explanation.

It is an all-consuming, powerful experience

that takes over all of our senses.

So, yes, soon we will leave the seashore for now.

We will walking away from the crashing waves,

from the fishermen – from James and John,

from the sandaled Messiah who strolls along sand and surf alike.

But the water we will carry with us.

It has been with us since the very beginning.

It is a part of who we are.

It moves us like a buoy on the waves,

Just as it move in and through us.

It is God.

Never forget that you are indeed People of the Sea, People of the Faith.

And it is good . . .

so very good indeed.

Song of Reflection:

Away from the Roll of the Sea by Allister MacGillvary- performed by Cape Breton Chorale

<https://youtu.be/fAuutbB65vU>

(Played with images from Port Morien Wharf, beginning **3:30 mins** <https://youtu.be/pemyVWIVJFA>)

Offertory

Great Mystery, we have come here to worship and to receive whatever we need from this day. But we have also come here to give. We give of ourselves, offering our skills and talents, even when it takes courage to do so. We give from our resources, trusting that there will always be enough. We give from our hearts, knowing that we have endless supplies of love. We hand over now what we bring so our hands will be empty to receive again. May it be so!

Prayer for Anchoring Adapted from Joyce Rupp

We turn to you, Holy One, in this time of turmoil amid the waters of life and we pray:

Anchor our minds in your unswerving serenity that lies beneath the wild waves of our discontent.
Anchor every heartbeat and breath of ours in the wide ocean of your endless compassion.
Anchor ongoing longings for world peace in the stream of your eternal harmony.

Anchor a respect for every human being in the clear waters of your non-judgment.
Anchor in the steady undercurrent of your justice each choice to end unbearable injustice.
Anchor deeply in your merciful forgiveness any inner surges toward retaliation and revenge.

Anchor the best of our talents and abilities to serve generously in the reservoir of your grace.
Anchor in the depths of your divine wisdom our questions and concerns about the future.
Anchor every storm that riles our hearts in the gracious tranquility of your abiding love.

We share these prayers with you, because we all need to find our strength these days in a Divine Source. And we find it in the same source that Jesus found his, when he prayed saying, Our Father . . .

Announcements, Joys and Concerns

Blessing

Let us go now from this place, feeling refreshed and alive.
May we carry within us the light but also the waters of creations.
As we go, may we know that we are one with the earth.
And may we prepare ourselves now to go forth and celebrate all that is good.

Song for Going Forth:

VU 352

I Danced in the Morning (Lord of the Dance)

<https://youtu.be/klcsqF2pplA>

performed by The Corries in Edinburgh in 1969

Sharing the Light

Watch from 35 seconds to the end of the video:

<https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/ess05.sci.ess.eiu.riseset/observe-sunrise-and-sunset/>

We take the light with us as we go,
as if grabbing the sun and pulling it down from the sky.
Just as it has lit our way down the path of worship,
may it light our way wherever the wind takes us.

All images, prayers, and reflections by Ali Anningson unless otherwise stated.