

Home Worship Service August 9th, 2020

Invitation to Worship

In the calm bright weather

We feel safe in the dwelling place of the Holy.

When our Spirit journey takes us into deep waters,

We are borne up by the steadfast strength of Love.

In the storms which rage within and around,

We sail by the Light at the heart of all that is.

Even in our greatest fears,

Spirit breathes around us, in us, through us and under us.

WE are not alone, and for this we give thanks! Amen.

We Sing:

Spirit Dancing on the Waters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O56w5Kc16Y>

words by Walter Farquharson music by Lori Erhardt arranged by Ken Gray, sung by Grace United Church ensemble, Dartmouth

Prayer

Wise and loving God, your people have journeyed through stormy waters at times- in our lives, our faith, our church, our human community. We have worked hard to stay the course, looking to your Light, trusting to your tender care. At times we grow weary, like your prophets of old. What has come of all our struggling and striving? What legacy do we pass on to those who come after us? What hope can we find? What words of wisdom can we leave behind? How can we bring new life to your church? How can we bring hope and healing to your beloved world? We listen, open to the prompting of your Spirit. In the name of your Beloved. Amen.

Readings

all readings read by Judith Nelson

1 Kings 19:9-16 A prophet grows weary

19:9 Elijah. came to a cave and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

19:10 He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

19:11 He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;

19:12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

19:13 When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

19:14 He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

19:15 Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram.

19:16 Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.

Mark 4:35-40 stilling a storm

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

Contemporary Reading. "On Silence" by John O'Donohue

There are no words for the deepest things. Words become feeble when mystery visits and prayer moves into silence. In post-modern culture the ceaseless din of chatter has killed our acquaintance with silence. Consequently, we are stressed and anxious. Silence is a fascinating presence. Silence is shy; it is patient and never draws attention to itself. Without the presence of silence, no word could ever be said or heard. Our thoughts constantly call up new words. We become so taken with words that we barely notice the silence, but the silence is always there. The best words are born in the fecund silence that minds the mystery

Reflective Music

Dance of the Blessed Spirits Christoph Willibald Gluck] flute duet Garner Souza Lima.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yb4022fErZQ>

Reflection by Jane:

What is Elijah doing in the cave?

Elijah has a nasty case of fatigue-
Prophecy fatigue,

He's doing God's work in unfriendly territory.

Today- we might question that work- should you interfere with other people's religion and make them adopt yours?

But that would be another sermon , not the one I'm doing today.

The point is , Elijah has been doing what he feels called to do, and it's not working for him.

He feels overwhelmed, alone, fighting impossible odds.

He thinks folk are out to get him- and he's right.

The only safe place to be is hiding in a cave.

Fatigued?

These days we've got COVID fatigue, on top of whatever was fatiguing us already.

We know it all too well- it's exhausting-

And now we are hearing this is how we will have to live for at least another year or two,

Before enough of us can get vaccinated , or choose to, and before we learn how long and how well the vaccine will work.

This fatigues me , for sure.

Short-term crises- adrenalin kicks in.

Long-term way of life- not so much.

Do you ever feel angry about this?

Or sad ,

Or just plain worn down?

It doesn't seem fair.

By the unfairness of all of this.

We've done our best and now we've lost so much that made our lives rich and fulfilling and connected .

Including the things we did together in church and community.

And where do we go from here?

We can't spend the next year or two in separate caves.

especially, we are not getting younger- who's to say how many more years we've got?

Have you thought or felt or prayed:

What now?

Enough already

How am I supposed to do this?

And where are you, God, anyway?

If you even exist.

So where's God anyway?

Elijah likely believed God existed, most did then, but what use was his God?

Was his God like the other ancient gods, not even caring about him, happy to throw him and other humans under the bus?

And why was he going through all this misery when he was trying to live a good life?

Elijah gets no easy answers.

But he learns to listen for God in a different way-

Not doing spectacular stuff , not making a big noise-

But a still small voice -
One you can't even hear unless you quiet down enough.

Elijah needed to stop being busy, stop trying to get stuff done, just stop,
So he could hear a quiet presence,
One who cared about him, understood him,
And wanted him to get some help, including another prophet to work alongside him, and one day take over.
Elijah realizes that he is just part of something bigger, evolving beyond him, and even beyond his life span- he will do his part but he can't figure it all out on his own.

And for us?

We too have slowed down,
Our calendars are no longer full,
Our social circles are smaller.
Some things take longer to do than they used to- even going out the door takes longer, getting stuff done takes longer- or so it seems.
Slowing down invites us to quiet ourselves,
And to listen for that still small voice-
How and where is the Divine, the Holy One, the Spirit, speaking to us?
What are we discovering about Holy Mystery, Holy Light, Holy Love?
And how will this help us in days and weeks and months to come?

Some of you have written about your spiritual journey these last few weeks in the Cooperator.
It is for sure a time to listen for that still small voice.
And as we listen - as we talk with each other- as we pray- as we gather even remotely on a Sunday,
I hope you know you are not in this alone,

A story about staying the course

Elijah could not stay in the cave -
He had to get out and take on the world - though he would now do it differently- and not alone.

And the early Jesus community had to take on the world-
But how?

At first, they were few, and even when they were more, they did not have much to work with.

When Jesus friends got into that boat , they didn't not have much to work with- asked his friends to sail their boat-
It wasn't much of a boat- just a rickety, leaky thing cobbled together out of whatever they could find, barely seaworthy in a storm,
Sudden storms could scuttle better boats than theirs.
No wonder they were scared.

How could Jesus sleep through that racket?
When they wake him up, he stays calm and calms the waves and wind. .
Rather than believing Jesus could change the laws of nature,
I'd say "Peace , be still" was for his crew.
If you're on a rickety boat, you don't need people moving around abruptly,
You need everyone at their post, doing what they have to do, to try to stay afloat-
And they will do it better if they calm down and stay focused.
So that- I would guess- was the real miracle!

And this wasn't just a random sailing trip.
This was the infant church steering its course, following Jesus' lead.
Feeling pretty small and rickety amid stormy waters and winds-
The powers that wanted to shut them down.

The Jesus community was still puny in the face of Empire, of military might, of unfriendly religious authorities.
Their only hope was to stay the course
Which meant managing their fears and anxieties,
Which meant connecting with a still calm Divine presence,
A presence as near as their own heart, their own breath.
They needed to spread that peaceful inner strength all around.
Not just for their individual selves but for each other-
So they would know, we are in the same boat,
And the Holy One is there with us, saying "Peace be still"

Steering our course through Pandemic

And just so you and I need to keep sharing that Divine connection in community.

Yes, speaking of our fears and anxieties, speaking can reduce their power over us, and listening to each other-
But also hearing that still small voice together, and knowing that voice is speaking within us.

That's what gets us out- carefully-

Or seeing friends- carefully-

Or maybe to today's picnic- carefully-

Or sometime soon into the church building- carefully.

It's not risk free- it never was- and we are vulnerable, we are mortal, every one of us.

And if we emerge, we practice care not just for ourselves but for each other.

Together - even when apart- may we remember we are accompanied by Love and Peace and Light,

And may we listen for signs and words of divine Presence, as small perhaps as butterflies and hummingbirds, as gentle perhaps as the smallest breeze,

Words of courage spoken out of the silence of Mystery itself,

Awakening our True Colours once again.

May it be so!

More Music of Reflection:

True Colours

By Camden Voices Virtual Choir

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqWQCWc_zCc

Offering

Holy One, Source of Peace, Healer of broken hearts and lives, we seek to steer this ship, your church, through changeable waters, all hands to the deck, as we set our course by Love and Light. And so we share our gifts, all that we have, all that we are- so that together we may withstand life's troubles, together we can persevere in compassion, together we may practice a deep peace, for the good of one another and the good of all your beloved. May it be so!

Prayers

Prayer adapted from Daniel Chesney Kanter

God of many names and mystery beyond all our naming,

Persist in guiding us to a quiet measure of this moment,

That we might link heart to heart in the stillness and calm,

Leaving behind all scurrying and fury, rush and contempt

For the shore of this quiet moment.

We who gather together today

Coming from many corners of the land

Join in breath over breath

So that we might hold the suffering and care for the mourning

And celebrate with the joyful.

Today we pray over those in our midst who struggle

And appreciate those who have enough spirit to give today

We pray in the names of all those known and unknown, present and absent, remembered and forgotten.

In a moment of silence, we hold in Love and Light the people of Lebanon in these exceptionally difficult times,

And all those for whom we would pray.

We pray in the names of all helpers of humankind in the words shared by communities around the world and across the ages; Our Father [or Mother, or Creator] etc.

Announcements, Joys and Concerns

- Please note that the Open Door has been changed to Wednesday August 19th 3-5 pm
- Face-to-Face at the Point: Sunday, August 9, AFTER church (about 11:30 a.m.) at the Point on the grassy area near the heart statue. There are no washrooms, but the parking is easier there than at Centennial Park, so it will allow all to participate more easily. ALL are welcome, even furry buddies!!

We Sing Along

Will Your Anchor Hold? [BBC Songs of Praise recording, with a brass band]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTfypuXwrMA>

Blessing

As you go forth, know that you do not walk alone. Light and Love travel with you even through stormy waters. May we trust: no act of compassion or courage, no word of kindness is wasted. May we trust: infinite Creativity, radiant Wisdom, strengthening Spirit live within us and around us. Today and always, beloved ones, we shall walk with God!

Music for Going Forth

MV 223

We Shall Walk with God South African/Swaziland

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKybxg99fUc>

Unless otherwise indicated, prayers are by Jane Doull