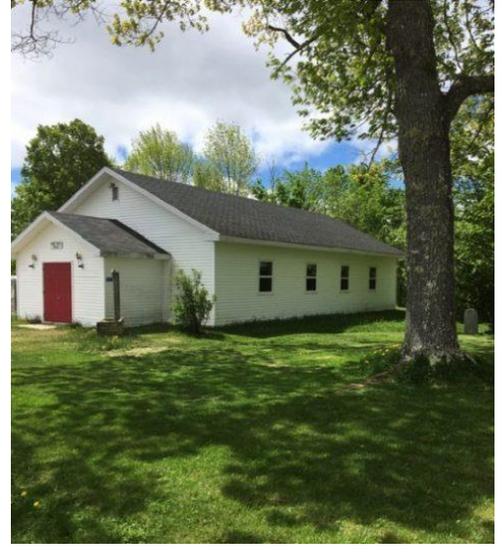


Home Worship Service September 20th, 2020



Welcome

We acknowledge the Passamaquoddy People and their stewardship of this land throughout the ages

Gathering Words Though apart , we gather together with spiritual seekers here and everywhere, knowing that we are one in Love, in Compassion and in Hope, today and always.

Opening Music

We Are One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PKWO1cZMHs>

[Doreen Lankshear Smith/Jeeva Sam arranged by David Kai]

you can listen to the instrumental music or sing along [words provided]

Opening Prayer

Holy One, we gather today in several places, some in the sanctuary at Wesley, some outdoors in Scotch Ridge, and some of us sheltering in place. We wish we could safely be together as we once were- we miss seeing everyone's faces as we used to. Those of us worshipping at home may miss our beloved gathering places, often tended by our love and care, places where we have loved to welcome friends old and new. But we have learned - all places are sacred- there is no place you do not dwell among us, and within. You have dwelt with us in our homes, in our hearts, in our prayers wherever we say them, however we say them. We remain spiritual community, visible or not- among the home worshippers today are friends from out of province who have connected with our Zoom community. We are not alone even in our loneliest moments. Today we hold in Love those who are gathering in person, praying that they may be safe, praying that they may find spiritual nourishment even among COVID restrictions, And we know we are also in their prayers. Apart and yet together, may we find the blessing, the peace, the inspiration we need, for the living of these days.

Readings

Psalm 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, God of Hosts.

My soul longs, even faints for the courts of God.

My heart and my flesh cry for joy to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a house,

And the swallow a nest where she may lay her young.

At your altars, God of Hosts, my sovereign, my god.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O God of hosts, to me.

Happy are those who dwell in your house,

Ever singing your praise.

Happy are those whose strength is in you,

Who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.

Going through the valley of Baca,

They find a spring from which also to drink.

The early rain also covers it with pools of water.

They go from strength to strength

To appear before God in Zion.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O God of hosts to me.

O God of hosts, hear my prayer;

Give ear, O God of Jacob.

Behold, O God, our shield, look on the face of your anointed.

Truly a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For you, God, are a sun and shield

You will give grace and honour.

No good thing will you withhold

From those who live the upright life.

O God of hosts, happy are those who put their trust in you.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O God of hosts, to me.

Acts 2: 42-47 The common life of the early Jesus followers.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds* to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home* and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

John 14:22-27 God will dwell with you

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, why is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?'

Jesus answered 'Those who love me will be true to my word, and Abba God will love them, and we will come to them and make our dwelling place with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. Yet the message you hear is not mine, but it comes from the One who sent me. 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom Abba God will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Reflection by Jane:

Joy on a COVID morning

Setting the scene

Do you remember when you were last in a church building?

Last time I was we gathered cautiously, keeping a distance, not using hymn books, not passing the offering plate, no handshakes, no hugs, no coffee hour- We sang, not knowing when we would sing again.

Six months later, some are gathering in the Wesley sanctuary today, with far more precautions- including masks, no singing [except a solo], no socializing.

We have to be very careful gathering a group indoors in a confined space.

And then I will be going on to St James, this week trying an outdoor service, short, and followed by a bring your own picnic- no singing, being super careful.

Outside gatherings are safer than indoor ones, but still require caution- and of course it's already a little cold to be outside.

You who are reading this are not at either Wesley or Scotch Ridge today.

Some of you are too far away to be here in person.

Some of you are in Middle Musquodoboit, Nova Scotia, using this service while you are seeking a new minister.

Some of you are around here but it's just too risky for you to be in a group setting just now.

Some may not want to go out to a service with no music or coffee or socializing

Like so much these days, it may not be as enjoyable as it used to be.

And some of you would rather worship at home on your own schedule

Over the last 6 months we have remembered church is not just who is there physically in one place

And we want church to include all of you, wherever you are today.

And yet

And yet, even as we enjoy a choice of Sunday options,

We have all lost something.

Just as seniors in long term care and their loved ones have,

Just as young people and their parents have,

Just as so many of us high-risk folks have as we keep our social circles small, perhaps even staying away from those who are exposed to more people than we are.

And today some of you miss the friends with which you used to gather for Sunday worship- but you ust can't be there yet.

And yet, as you worship at home today, I hope you can find some joy-

I offer you these thoughts on today's readings to help you find some joy.

You and me both!

Sacred time and space - or not being in the temple.

Our psalm is about. not being in the Jerusalem temple,

Longing to be there, but it's just not possible.

At one time, no one could go there, as it had been destroyed-

It got rebuilt but was never quite the same, too much had changed- and then in year 70 of our era, it was destroyed, never to be built again.

Some of you reading this used to attend church buildings which are closed or have been torn down, so you too can't go back to what was.

Today this psalm speaks of all the sacred spaces, all the sacred times where we seek the consolation of divine presence,

When we cannot enter a church building, we enact sacred space, we imagine it, we enter it spiritually,

Whenever we take time for prayer, spiritual practice,

Whenever we show up for Divine Presence, whatever that is for us.

Joy in what we still have, no matter what

Even if everything else has changed, we can still find joy in sacred time and sacred places, whenever, and wherever we show up.

And joy in what remains with us, no matter how much has changed.

Jesus prepares his friends for changes to come- they wouldn't always have him in their midst- they wouldn't even always have each other.

Changes are all around us today-

we aren't who we were 6 months ago- our daily lives have changed- -there are friends and loved ones who have passed out of this life- there are companion animals no longer with us.

And yet, we still have words of faith, Jesus' words and other words, God still dwells in our midst, wherever we are - spiritual wisdom and divine Connection are there with us and for us always,

And we may find even more joy as we rest more deeply in these words and this presence.

And, wait, there's more

Seeking sacred time and space gives us joy- as does holding fast to spiritual wisdom and Divine Connection.

But there is more - the Gospel reading addresses a small circle of Jesus' closest friends- but that circle widened and widened-

We are here because of that widening circle.

Our Acts reading expresses that expansive beloved community,

Caring and sharing, supporting spiritual awakening and spiritual growth –

In time expanding all over the Mediterranean and beyond, to include many people who did not see, did not know each other.

And locally or globally, God worked through that community to save people-

I don't mean helping them get to heaven, or saving them from the other place-

It was about this life- saving people from what they needed to be saved from, be it poverty, injustice, loneliness, illness-

And saving them for what they needed life to be.

And so today

Today we are trying to save ourselves and each other from getting COVID- that's why we are helping you worship in whatever way is safe for you- that's why we all put on masks, keep distance, wash hands-

That's how we are beloved community today.

Perhaps we are also trying to save ourselves and each other from discouragement, loneliness, and all the other troubles Covid has brought.

We are also striving to save our planet, at least the small patch of it we can save.

But we are also saving each other for a full, abundant and joyful life,

Joy in creation, in friends, in loved ones, in animal companions, in all that makes us want to be alive.

Joy in acts of loving service- in person, or over the phone, lending a helping hand, saying a prayer, whatever we can do to lighten burdens and brighten days.

Joy in loving this beloved world - it also needs to be saved, not just for ourselves but for those coming after us.

And joy in widening our circle of caring and friendship- even while we limit our personal bubble, our Wesley circle keeps widening with new members, with new friends on Zoom,

Just as outside of here, perhaps some of us have made new friends online, or rekindled old friendships, picking up the phone for a good conversation.

Perhaps you've learned new recipes, honed your quilting skills, built birdhouses, found new favourite authors, expanded your garden, -

Perhaps you have become even more grateful for this precious community, this beloved community, this resilient community.

Even amid trouble- and some trouble as John Lewis reminded us is good trouble, as we try to change the world for the better-

Even amid trouble, good or bad, there is beauty,

In sacred time and space, in the words of scripture and other sacred words, in beloved community,

And in the Divine Presence which is through all and in all and beneath all and above all.

May it be so. Amen.

Reflection Music:

MV150

Spirit God, Be Our Breath, Be Our Song

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7POkB4mb_rk

[played and sung by Laura Beth Smith, Upper Tantallon United Church]

Minute for Mission

Disabled Farmers in Cuba

Mission & Service—funded global partner the Cuban Council of Churches has united two goals in a pilot project: encouraging sustainable farming and creating churches that are more inclusive of people with disabilities. Twenty families in four provinces in Cuba receive farming support and pastoral care. Farmers diversify their skills, gain more autonomy, and improve their families' resilience.

Ernesto González, the project coordinator, is an agronomist who lives with partial paralysis. He offers support to farmers who may have visual impairments, intellectual disabilities, damaged hands, or other challenges, explaining that the project meets a need for inclusion while supporting economic improvement.

An important part of the project includes participants giving back to their communities and to other people living with disabilities. This way, strengthening family economies also involves building a social economy—one built on collaboration rather than competition. For example, one man who has an intellectual disability works with his parents to produce a variety of vegetable crops, and then they share some of their produce with a seniors' home. Other families raise sheep, goats, or pigs.

“Our emphasis is to support these people first with what they want to do,” says Ernesto.

Funds raised through the Gifts with Vision program of the United Church are used to provide small grants so families can buy seeds, small animals, or whatever they need to improve their farms.

If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

Offering Prayer

With joy, O Beloved, we receive the gift of this faith community, and all the gifts of family, friendship, community and creation. With joy, we give what we can, so that this gathering place may remain, so that this faith community can remain, so that our service to your world may continue. As we continue to build hope for our future may we find blessing in sacred receiving and sacred giving, today and each day. May it be so!

Prayers of the People

Holy One, we give thanks for all that gives us joy today-
The autumn colours,
The peace and tranquillity of our small towns and our countryside,
The people and animals who fill our lives with love,
Memories which bring comfort,
the gift of sacred words, words of wisdom, words of inspiration,
And beloved community however we find it in these days.

Today, we pray for faith communities, ours and others, making their way through these
challenging times,
Balancing the need for connection and the need for safety,
Seeking new ways to be community,
New ways to be about our mission of compassion and justice.

Today, we pray for all who feel far from joy , as they endure adversity-
Be it the wildfires on the west coast,
Be it grief from tragic losses, as that of the young man in St Stephen and the youth in
Blackville,
Be it living in high COVID zones,
Or even here, the stresses of trying to work and parent while wondering when there might be
symptoms to be tested or a time of isolation,
Or the loneliness of a senior in long-term care or the struggles of their loved ones who are
restricted in their ways of visiting,
Or the COVID fatigue affecting many as we go into our second 6 months.
WE pray for all who help us through these times-
Those at the front lines when there are accidents, disasters or crime scenes,
Those at the front lines in schools and health care,
Those in public health and government trying to keep us safe in ways we can tolerate.

And close to home, we remember those who are ill at home or in the hospital,
Those who are grieving the loss of loved ones, such as the family and friends of Marjorie
Linton,
Those mourning the loss of beloved pets,
Those who are caregivers,
And all bearing burdens perhaps known only to you, Compassionate One,
In a moment of silence, we hold in love and light those who need our prayers.
In another moment of silence, we surround ourselves with that same Love and Light.
These and all our prayers we gather into the words Jesus gave his friends to say together;
Our Father [or Mother or Creator]..

Ministry and Mission, Joys and Concerns

Face to Face St James Sunday September 20th 11:30 am Scotch Ridge Hall

St James people, please mark your calendars: We have been missing each other so we are planning a face to face gathering once it's cooler but still fit to be outdoors.

Short worship and picnic, please bring your own chair and your own food and drink.

Physical distancing and other safety protocols to be followed. Rain date: September 27th

Fall Equinox Sunday September 20th 7 pm Beach at Indian Point

Interfaith Celebration "Deep Peace of The Changing Seasons". You are invited to attend a Fall Equinox Celebration Sunday 20th. All ages welcome. Bring chairs and hand drums, tambourines as desired. COVID precautions apply - practice social distancing, maintain family/social bubbles, wear masks as needed. Rain location is Wesley United Church sanctuary, William St.

Music for Going Forth

MV 214

May God's Sheltering Wings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGlrzNO7erw>

Maxine & Allison sung by a duet from Westminster United, Humboldt, SK

Words and music: Judith Snowdon, 2004

May God's nurturing arms, her cradling arms protect you, and hold you in her love, and hold you in her love

Words of Parting and Blessing

As we go forth today, may we take with us the peace, light and love we have encountered as part of beloved community. May we know the Holy One goes with us, always present, always guiding, always surrounding us with compassion. May we find sacred moments and sacred places each day until we can all safely be together in one gathering place. May we find and share the joy and the hope we need for the living of these uncommon days. May we know, Spirit breathes through us and upholds our breathing, as we make our way into whatever is yet to come. Amen.

All prayers by Jane V. Doull