

Home Worship Service September 6th, 2020



Photo courtesy of Tim Foulkes
Simpson Hill and Karen's Cache
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1386669264760729>

Invocation

from Thich Nhat Hanh [Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist, 1926]

"People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the curious eyes of a child - our own two eyes. All is a miracle."

Opening Prayer

In these last days of summer, we long for warmth and peace and rest to continue. But time moves on - as midsummer flowers make way for autumn flowers, and blueberry harvest makes way for the apple harvest, as the days grow shorter, and the morning and evening air cooler, as the rhythms and routines of autumn draw near. Some of us have worked hard, at seasonal jobs, at growing gardens, at looking after any visitors. Some have perhaps enjoyed summer activities and excursions. All have worked hard to cope with the challenges of COVID, on top of whatever other challenges we face. Today we pause to breathe in your gentle, restorative Spirit- today we seek a double share of serenity- today we pray that we will find joy and peace and a sense of your guiding , compassionate presence in these days and weeks to come. May it be so!

We Sing

Lord of All Hopefulness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8mti7VL3gg>

words by Jan Struther, tune Slane traditional Irish] sung by St Alban's Choir
[The Anglicans among us may have grown up with this hymn, as Jane did]

Readings

by Margie Ramsay

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your animals, or the alien resident in your towns.

For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the Holy One blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

How to rest: Matthew 11: 28-30

28 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Time for Serenity, Anyone? a poem by William Stafford [1914-1993]

“who had a quiet daily ritual of writing and whose writing focuses on the ordinary“ [Wikipedia]

I like to live in the sound of water,
In the feel of mountain air. A sharp
Reminder hits me; this world still is alive;
It stretches out there, shivering towards its own
Creation, and I'm part of it. Even my breathing
Enters into the elaborate give and take,
This bowing to sun and moon, day or night,
winter, summer, storm, still - this tranquil
Chaos that seems to be going somewhere.
This wilderness with a great peacefulness in it.
This motionless turmoil, this everything dance.

Special Music

We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12x8aZH_Zd0

[Ruth Duck/Marty Haugen, MV 143] sung by Norval United Church Virtual Choir

Reflection by Jane:

Living into A New Season

For me, equinox or no equinox, fall begins with Labour Day weekend.
All my life that's been when school or university or college is about to start,
That's when summer vacations wind up, church and other activities get going,
That's when nights get chilly, autumn vegetables are harvested, leaves start turning.
For some golf and tennis and camping and fishing and gardening can go on a while longer- and day
trippers and vacationers still come to town,
Even so, change is in the air.

What's different this year?

What isn't?

Summer wasn't summer as we know it.

Visitors were fewer- Excursions were restricted -Community activities were cancelled.

And even what still happened - happened differently, cautiously.

Fall feels different too-

We enter it more fatigued- even trying to live normally in COVID takes more energy than we'd usually
have to expend.

And we enter with trepidation:

What will happen with school starting, a snap election, congregations gathering in person?

What if known cases of COVID show up in our area?

So how do we cope with everything being different?

First, remember to breathe

Try it now - Just breathe in for a few seconds- hold it a few seconds- breathe out again slowly.

Repeat.

Seriously, remember to breathe.

It helps us calm down, it helps us stay healthy,

And it's the beginning of many a spiritual practice.

Be it sitting in meditation or centering prayer or meditative walking-

Or even singing, in the privacy of your own home.

And right now, we need all the help we can get calming ourselves and tending our bodies and spirits.

More than that- whenever we remember to breathe, we remember we aren't alone.
God is as close to us as our own breath-
Indeed, God's breath, God's Spirit lives in our breath.
Whatever we are facing, we are not facing it alone.
We are drawing on strength, energy, life beyond our own.

That's what I think Jesus was getting at in today's sayings-
You may indeed feel burdened, overwhelmed - who doesn't at times?
And COVID compounds this, as we are all more isolated than usual,
I don't know about you but when I am stressed and anxious, conversation and fun with others helps
me get out of myself, and get things back into proportion, back in balance.
And that is harder these days.

A burden shared is a burden halved,
And so, it's good to connect safely with our friends,
And if we need help with anything, or can give someone else a hand,
safely, that eases burdens too.

And it's good to connect with a Holy One who wants to lift our burdens, who wants us to know we are
not alone.

One way to picture this- the Breath breathing through our breath, supporting our breath.
Another- the ground of our being-
Meaning that no matter how far or hard we fall, God or Spirit or Holy Mystery is always there beneath
us, like a safety net.

I remember when I was trying to get up courage to jump into a swimming pool-
I was really scared to do that- I was afraid I would sink.
A friend got in and promised she'd catch me if I started sinking.
That was enough to get me to jump in and stay afloat.
So it is with God.

So breathe- seriously, breathe-
And remember who is breathing in and through you.
You aren't in this alone.
You need your own breath, but you are not relying only on your own breath.

And remember the Sabbath

And don't just breathe.
Remember to take time out.

When children are cranky or hyper,
Sometimes modern parents or guardians give them a time out.
Well, this isn't such a modern practice.

When I was like that, my parents sent me to my room - hoping that when I emerged, I'd be a calmer
and more pleasant child.

Well, setting aside any judgment of ourselves,
Grownups too need time out.

What, you might be saying, time out ?

Aren't we already doing time-out, in this pandemic season where everything suddenly came to a
crashing halt?

Wouldn't we rather do time-in, especially the extroverts around us.

Yes, it's been time-out but it takes some doing to make it a refreshing time out, a restful time out, a
nourishing time out.

Those of you who've managed it have been reclaiming an ancient practice -

The practice of Sabbath.

The commandment our modern world encourages us to break, regularly-

Now that we can be plugged in 24/7,

Now that more and more have to work on Sundays,

Now that fewer clear their schedule for church or other spiritual gatherings-

The ancient Israelites built in this practice- long before there was a 40-hour working week anywhere in the world -

And framed their creation story to explain why.

If even God took a break, then surely we should too.

if God paused to enjoy God's creation, then why wouldn't we?

The Deuteronomy version of the ten commandments stresses the justice aspect of this-

No one should have to work all the time.

We need Sabbath more than ever- whether you take it on Sunday or another day - whether you can manage a whole day of it or build in mini-Sabbaths.

Often our physical work is more wearying as we have to do it all differently-

Just think how tired the teachers and children will get this week!

But also, we are doing extra mental and emotional work all the time- extra problem solving, extra concern and worry for loved ones, coping with loneliness, coping with the stresses of having life turned upside down.

And the work will intensify as we gather more with each other, outside, or even, with great caution, inside.

You will need rest.

You will need times when you suspend worry, and planning.

When you turn off the news.

When you relax your body and mind,

Whether walking or sitting outdoors,

Whether gardening or cooking or knitting or quilting, not because you've got to but for enjoyment,

Whether cuddling your pets,

Whether doing stretches and Yoga,

Whether escaping into a mystery novel or whatever you like to read,

Whether listening to your favourite music,

Whether reading the Bible or other inspirational reading,

Whatever gets you to set down your burdens,

Or with William Stafford, entering into the wider give and take of creation.

In all these ways we remember to enjoy and savour the world around us, as we are meant to do.

And we remember, in a phrase my friend Bev uses, God will take the night shift,

So, we can rest- both at night and in sabbath moments and days.

Take-away

So, remember to breathe.

Remember to rest.

Remember to take sabbath time as you can.

And in these simple practices, remember the Holy One is breathing through you, upholding you, sharing your burdens, and intending abundance of life for you and for all.

And remember- deep in your hearts- the common vision, the common song, the common story

Telling Creation that we are one, one with each other and one with the Holy.

Amen.

Reflection Music:

Deep in Our Hearts

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=968708346870763&extid=Ji3PZu6GpwrYUwn1>

[Oldham/Klusmeier] - an instrumental version.

You can sing along or just listen - with these words in front of you

*Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.*

*Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
Deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
Deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.*

*Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
Deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
Deep in our hearts there is a common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.*

*Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.*

Minute for Mission

Many of us enjoy the sounds, as well as the sights, of everyday life- but that's not so easy for those who cannot hear- especially these days when we are wearing masks in public. We give thanks for those interpreters who help the deaf community "hear" the provincial and federal public health updates. There are also those who reach out in communities of faith.

Deaf Ministry in Newfoundland

Mission & Service has been supporting the Deaf ministry in Newfoundland and Labrador for 33 years. In 1987, the School for the Deaf in St. John's wrote a letter to the local presbytery requesting pastoral care on behalf of the United Church. Beverley Ares, a lay delegate, was asked to consider the role.

She was interested but concerned that she didn't know sign language. Nonetheless, she answered the call, first as a volunteer and then as an employee. Beverley began learning American Sign Language and also took courses in theology. She was a quick study. Over the next 23 years she served the students and their families as an interpreter at worship services at First United Church in Mount Pearl, as a faith formation leader at the school, as an advocate for the Deaf community, and as a pastoral care provider and friend.

But by 2010, enrollment was greatly declining, and the provincial government decided to close the school. Thanks to the vision and commitment of a local ecumenical committee, the Deaf ministry continued. Today, Beverley and others continue to provide community, worship leadership, and pastoral care to the Deaf community in and around St. John's. Thanks to the support of local churches and Mission & Service, individuals like Beverley have made a real difference in the lives of many Deaf children and adults and their families.

Nancy Emberly, a former student, says, "While I attended church regularly as a child, I didn't understand who God was until I met Beverley." Nancy is now a teacher and has replaced Beverley as the coordinator of Deaf ministry in Newfoundland.

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

As we make gifts of money - as best we can- we also make gifts of time – as we serve this spiritual community and the world around us. We also offer the gift of ourselves, at work, at home, in community. May your Light shine through our living and giving, may your Wisdom inform our words, may your Compassion shape our deeds- and so may we truly be your hands and feet and heart , as we do your work on this earth. Amen.

Prayer

adapted from one written by our Moderator Richard Bott for the start of school

Holy One,

it's not too long before children and grandchildren head back to school-

Some are already back, in the Yukon and on the prairies.

To be honest, we are worried, for the children we know best,

And for every single student —from the youngest to the eldest; and for every single teacher, every one of the support staff, and the administrators

the people we trust to help our children learn in an environment where they are safe, cared about, and respected;

But... we are worried.

We are worried about their health, in the face of COVID-19.

about the resources we've set aside,

not just to ensure their learning, but their learning in safety.

We remember not only those learning on site,

But those learning from home, sitting in front of a screen, trying to stay connected.

We are worried about the students who won't have what they need —
technologically, or people-wise —to experience the schooling they need.

So, we pray.

We pray that our decision-makers listen to the science,

make sure the resources are there, do all they can to help the children
who will be in schoolrooms and at home;

We pray

for the health of our children, and their teachers, and all those who support them,

And the family members they will come home to.

May we work together, in equity and in hope,

to ensure that every student has what they need,
to learn well and safely.

And we continue to pray for all of our health-care workers, and those researching therapies and
vaccines,

that we might be able to respond to COVID-19,

and have the health to work on the rest of what needs to be done.

May we trust- we are doing our best for all our children.

May we trust - we are doing our part to keep them and everyone else safe.

May we strive to remedy the inequalities COVID has shown us , mindful of those most vulnerable in
these times,

Even as we are mindful of what our province needs, what our country needs, what our world needs to
be the best for all,

Even as we support those close to home in whatever struggles they face.

In a moment of silence, we hold in love and light those who need our prayers today.

May that same love and light surround each one of us in our anxious moments.

These and all the prayers of our hearts we gather into the words shared by communities around the
world and across the ages: Our Creator [or Father or Mother, or.]

Announcements, Joys and Concerns

Dedications are most welcome remembering, honouring, celebrating a special person, event or season! Please email wesleyunitedstandrews@gmail.com with your request. Thanks!

Photos or any other requests to go with dedications – favourite flower or season etc.....

We Sing

VU 424

May the God of Hope

Strathroy United Church

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwoYDQGcX6A>

*May the God of hope go with us every day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing life and hope to every land and race.
Praying, let us work for peace, singing, share our joy with all,
Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

*May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
Freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear,
To a world restored, to human life renewed.
Praying, let us work for peace, singing, share our joy with all,
Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

Blessing

As we journey into this new season,
may we begin each day with a desire to make a difference,
may we meet its challenges with patience and perspective,
may we respond to each person with open mind and heart,
may we live gently and respectfully in creation,
and may we receive with thanksgiving times of rest and refreshment,
may we receive with delight each kind and caring word and deed,
and day by day may we cast our cares on the mercy of the Compassionate One,
and release our bodies and souls into the safety of Holy Mystery, Wholly Love,
That we may live well, even in these times, and do our part to turn the world around.

Music for Going Forth

Turn the World Around [Harry Belafonte] sung by Jean and Jim Strathdee

begin this link just before 6 minutes in to get the right piece.

<https://www.facebook.com/TheNaramataCentreSociety/videos/789222285169830/>

Prayers when not otherwise indicated by Jane V. Doull

Bulletin dedication:

