

# **ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

*A spiritual hub for  
creativity, discovery and growth*



***Sunday, September 6, 2020***

Minster

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## Welcome and Life of the Community

Welcome to St Paul's LIVE on Sunday, September 6, 2020! We are part of community worship today, each in our safe bubble, and here in the sanctuary of St Paul's, Perth, ON.

St Paul's offers worship in various formats during this pandemic time:

- via emailed bulletin with MP3 music files
- Over the summer on Zoom and now transitioning to YouTube for the fall
- in paper copy, printed and available at the church office door

If you have been unable to access these worship options, please contact the office so we can find a way to keep you connected.

These efforts have ensured that all the worship service participants, video and musician producers, and office administration have learned new ways of working as well. We all have learned new ways to live faithfully in challenging times!

With feedback and learnings from today's experience in this first return to *in sanctuary worship* there will be additional discussion on live-streaming Sunday via YouTube for future community worship.

We give thanks that many people have accessed St Paul's worship services as well as services from the Moderator, and other faith communities. We also give thanks for the calling groups who have kept in touch with one another. There are many ways that people have stayed connected which shows how much our community of faith means to each of us. Perhaps you have even met a few new people during this time.

So how did you observe SABBATH and worship time in August?

The month of August, as planned, was a worship holiday at St Paul's. Brad Mills and I were on holiday. There were no ZOOM or printed delivery of services. Did you take me up on my challenge to be a "mystery worshipper" at online worship services? A bit like the survey Worship and Arts did following summer services in 2019. How many services did you access? Where or what online services? Was there a theme to the service? What did you find meaningful about the service? Did the sermon challenge or support long-held ideas of God and how God works in the world?

...If you were a mystery worshipper and have anything to share with me or the Worship and Arts Team, please send it along in an email or by hand to the church mailbox.

Please read "What's Happening" for additional group announcements, dates to remember, team meetings, and upcoming events.

### *Acknowledgement of Land*

*The land on which we live and worship is the land of the Algonquin Anishnaabe Native People. We give thanks for their stewardship of land, and we seek to learn and live in reconciliation and hope. We give thanks for elders who guide and show us the way.*

*St Paul's is a member of Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble, and continues to educate the faith community to live out the learnings of the blessing of God's creation of the diversity of humanity.*

## **We Gather**

Greeting: God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

The Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

Friends, we worship God with our very lives each minute of each day.

**We have worshipped in different ways for many months.**

I was glad when they said unto me, "let us go to the house of Lord."

**With care and celebration we gather as we are able, here and elsewhere.**

**We worship God with gladness and joy.**

Prayer of Gathering Sing: Psalm 42, p 766 VU "As the Deer Pants for the Water"

"As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you;

You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.

Refrain You alone are my strength, my shield,

To you alone may my spirit yield,

You alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship you!

Day and night I cry, my heart is breaking, tears my only food;

While my enemies jeer and taunt me, saying "Where is Now your God?" R

Why am I so sad, so troubled, why must suffering be so long?

I will hope in you, my God and saviour, praise you with a song!" R

Learning with Children and Youth: "Passover Instructions" (based on Exodus 12:1-14)

**God gives Moses and Aaron instructions on how the children of Israel are to get themselves ready to leave the oppressor King Pharaoh in Egypt. Pack up the household, roast the lamb and eat it all, if anything is leftover, burn it, stay dressed and ready, eat in haste, and make dough without leavening, and carry it, be ready, stay safe.**

**Instructions on how to stay safe and well and we journey through time going to school, but do it all together, stay together, keep each other safe, and we will all make it through the journey to a safer world. It matters so much how each of us hears the instructions and follows them. Sometimes we might think that it doesn't matter, God thought of that. When God said eat it all, don't save any God knew that leftover meat might spoil and it would make people sick. God knows how we think! God wants us to take care of each other, in fact it is so important that we love our neighbour as we do ourselves.**

## **We Listen to what the Spirit is Saying to Us**

Scripture :

Matthew 18:15-20

Reproving Another Who Sins

15 "If another member of the church[d] sins against you,[e] go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.[f] 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence

of two or three witnesses. 17 If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

We Listen to what the Spirit is saying to Us

**Thanks be to God.**

Meditation: “Labour Relationships”

**The origins of Labour Day in Canada can be traced back to December 1872 when a parade was staged in support of the Toronto Typographical Union's strike for a 58-hour work-week, almost a full decade before a similar event in New York City by the American Knights of Labor, a late 19th-century U.S. labor federation, ...**

**Careful research reveals that Protestant and Catholic churches in Canada supported the justice of the labour movement when 12 hr days for workers were the norm, and when children and youth often began work at an early age in order to help support family life. Communities of faith continue to bring consistency of theology to action and advocacy for safe working conditions, equal employment opportunities, pay, and more issues for workers in Canada and in other countries. We are reminded that the clothing that we wear may be constructed by youth and children in foreign countries who are paid little as we rejoice in fashion and demand low cost for our apparel.**

**What does labour have to do with the passage of Matthew 18:15? Labour relations are about negotiation. We are in the midst of pandemic when many people are working from home bases. Labour relations may consist of how one lives with children at home instead of in school or child care, or a spouse who also needs internet for work and the inconsistency of rural access. Or the time and new rhythms that are necessary to get work done without the convenience of equipment close by. Or the need to balance home duties with work duties. It makes the sanest brain swim these days. A worker's mental health needs prime advocacy.**

**In church circles Matthew 18 is described as the mediation chapter and how to move from confrontation to communication. The UCC began its work with this chapter before the 1990s and printed it out in the Manuals. When there is dispute the first and second rounds of working through it begin with communicating the issue with the person, then with two people, seeking a way forward. And when that is not possible then to treat the person as an “alien or a tax collector”.**

Some interpretation would say that the alien was not welcome and tax collector was the home person who worked both sides for profit. Another interpretation would suggest that society could not live without the alien who helped with productivity and the tax collector kept the Jews safe and the Roman occupiers happy. It was a fine road for everyone to manage life within a stratified society of brutal occupiers. The alien and the tax collector were not ostracized.

Matthew 18 begins with the question of who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven and Jesus raises up the child, the lowest and least, and says that whoever welcomes the child like this in my name welcomes me. The consequences of not doing so are very severe.

Then the short parable of finding the lost sheep, one if responsible for finding that lost little one. It reminds me of St Paul's being a member of Affirm. The umbrella of God's love that shows preference for the least and the lowly regardless of family status, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and more. Then the mediation verses and then Peter asks how often one needs to forgive, and Jesus gives the times that always trip us up—not just 7 times but 70 x 7! The servant who is forgiven but does not forgive does not fair well.

Forgiveness is a process. The church has much to account for in its relationships toward those little ones who are entrusted to them. The First Nations, children in care, the elderly, the abused. The church cannot preach forgiveness until we change our ways, make reparations. Equally if one has offended another, one needs to change one's ways so as not to continually offend. We are commanded to forgive, and we are reminded by the Apostle Paul that grace is not cheap. We do not sin so that grace continually abounds and is cheap. Rather we recall the learning of costly grace that Jesus has shown us in the cross. Jesus continually calls us to repent, change our ways. God's love abounds and if we are truly sorry for our sins and demonstrate a change, then we have found new life.

Sometimes we are the offended and some times we are the offender. Sometimes we are the child and sometimes we think we are the greatest, sometimes we are lost and sometimes we are the 99, sometimes we are the forgiver and sometimes we refuse to change despite being forgiven.

In light of all the possibilities we give thanks that we can reflect honestly resting in God's grace and love for each of us as we change our ways.

Silent Personal Meditation

## **We Respond to God's Love and Blessings**

We offer Ourselves, Tithes, Offerings, Gifts of PAR and Tokens of Thanksgiving

### \*Offertory Dedication Prayer

**From each of us, Gracious God, multiply our mites and means so that your love is shared in the ministries of St Paul's, the Mission & Service Fund and beyond. Amen.**

### Anthem/ Special Music

#### Prayers of the People

A prayer for Labor Day

God, maker of the universe,  
who work moment by moment  
to sustain Creation,  
bless those who labour,  
who work for the weal of the world.

For those whose unseen labor eases our lives  
may we always be mindful and grateful.

For their diligence and pride in craft  
and faithful service we render thanks.

For those who work for the sake  
of people they will never see,  
we ask your blessing.

For those who risk and suffer,  
we ask your protection.

For those whose work is demeaning,  
whose conditions are poor,  
whose pay is unfair,  
we pray for justice.

We give honour to those whose labour  
is unseen and unrewarded.

We pray for those whose labour is forced,  
without rest, or freedom or dignity;  
for all who are coerced, endangered, enslaved,  
exploited or abused: we cry for justice.

We pray for those who seek labour  
and who find none,  
who are prevented by their bodies  
or their society from meaningful work.

We give thanks for all who labour,  
and pray that all may know the blessing  
of your Sabbath gift of rest.

Holy One, you who labour for our life,  
bless our work, that it may serve you  
and the mending of the world.

Amen

...Martin Garness-Holmes

## **We Depart to Serve with Joy**

“Thanks for the worship, folks”

Hymn: 178 MV “Who is My Mother”

1 Who is my mother, who is my brother?  
All those who gather round Jesus Christ:  
Spirit blown people born from the Gospel  
sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.

2 Differently abled, differently labelled,  
widen the circle round Jesus Christ:  
crutches and stigmas, culture's enigmas,  
all come together round Jesus Christ.

3 Love will relate us colour or status  
can't segregate us round Jesus Christ:  
family failings, human derailings  
all are accepted round Jesus Christ.

4 Bound by one vision, met for one mission  
we claim each other, round Jesus Christ:  
here is my mother, here is my brother,  
kindred in Spirit, through Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Commissioning

**“Grateful for God’s loving action,  
we cannot keep from singing.  
Creating and seeking relationship, in awe and trust,  
we witness to Holy Mystery who is Wholly Love.”**

Benediction: Aaron’s Blessing

The Postlude