

WORSHIP SERVICE FOR AUGUST 1st

CARLISLE AND KILBRIDE UNITED CHURCHES

Announcements: A reminder that worship for August will be in Kilbride, most likely a parking lot service. We welcome Rev. Allison's return.

Call to Worship:

One: Let us come to God with our burdens and concerns, with our joys and hopes

ALL: We turn to God, trusting in his goodness

One: Let us come to learn from the gentle and lowly Christ, God's chosen one

ALL: With a free spirit, we worship our God

Hymn: VU 579 "The Church Is Wherever God's People"

Thanks to Audrey and Corey de Jong from St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Beechwood, Ontario for sharing their voices, accompanied by Nancy McGregor. St Andrew's homepage includes a quotation I'd like to pass along: "Singing puts music in our Lives . . . Friends add Harmony!"

[The Church is Wherever God's People - YouTube](#)

The church is wherever God's people are praising,
singing God's goodness for joy on this day.

The church is wherever disciples of Jesus
remember his story and walk in his way.

The church is wherever God's people are helping,
caring for neighbours in sickness and need.

The church is wherever God's people are sharing
the words of the Bible in gift and in deed.

Acknowledgement:

We continue to keep in our hearts and prayers the Indigenous Peoples of our land. While we cannot change the past, we pray for healing and reconciliation in the present, and a future that recognizes the rights, the well-being and the gift of ALL peoples.

Opening Prayer:

Almighty and loving God,
you who always meet your people when they truly seek you, be present with us as
we gather here to praise your name. Come quietly to the still and open heart, and
come in such power that our greatest and deepest needs will be met,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn: VU 226 "For the Beauty of the Earth"

Minnesotan Lynn Peterson (vocalist, songwriter, and chemist!) sings a country-
influenced rendition of this well-known hymn, accompanied by stunning photography
by Bob Rorke.

[For The Beauty Of The Earth \(Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from out birth over and around us lies,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of each hour for the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For each perfect gift sublime to our race so freely given,
graces human and divine, flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

Confession and Assurance of Pardon

All-knowing God, as a people who are blessed with so much - access to the beauty
of nature all around us, access to literature and education, access to health
professionals and medical interventions, access to food and nutrition, access to our
religious teachings - access to so many things in our daily life that we take for
granted.

In this moment we are reassured by our access to the assurance of your pardon, knowing that you hear our prayers, listen to our hearts, and walk with us, always.
Amen

Scripture: excerpts from Proverbs 31: 10-31 Mark 9:33-37

The book of Proverbs is a collection of moral and religious teachings in the form of sayings and proverbs. In this section a king is getting advice from his mother. She wants her son to find a capable wife and goes on at great length, so I'm being bold and shortening the list.

Verse 10 onwards: "How hard it is to find a capable wife! She is worth far more than jewels! Her husband puts his confidence in her, and he will never be poor. As long as she lives, she does him good and never harm. She keeps herself busy making wool and linen cloth. She brings home food from out of the way places.

She gets up before daylight to prepare food for her family and to tell her servant-girl what to do. She looks at land and buys it, and with money she has earned, she plants a vineyard. She is a hard worker, strong and industrious. She knows the value of everything she makes, and works late into the night. She is generous to the poor and needy. She speaks with a gentle wisdom."

(Pause).....there's more, but you get the picture.

Mark 9:33-37 This event takes place as Jesus travels through Galilee with his Disciples.

They came to Capernaum, and after going indoors Jesus asked his Disciples, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they would not answer him, because on the road they had been arguing among themselves about who was the greatest. Jesus sat down, calls the twelve disciples, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all." Then he took a child and made him stand in front of them. He put his arms around him and said to them, "Whoever welcomes in my name one of these children, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not only me but also the one who sent me."

Reflection: 'WHO IS THE GREATEST?'

I remember hearing a story, I think it was in a sermon some years ago, about a mother who was preparing pancakes for her sons Kevin, 5 and Ryan, 6. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancakes (sound familiar?). Their

mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. She says "you know, boys, if Jesus were sitting here, he would say "let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait". Ryan thought for a moment, then turned to his younger brother and said "Kevin, you be Jesus".

A funny story, one that we can imagine happening. But isn't life a lot like that, really, about getting ahead? The Olympics so focus on Gold, that even Silver can seem a letdown, well, maybe only to some, but certainly the focus is on getting that medal. And in any of the World Series, what kind of credit did the teams get who did not make it into the finals, or the semi-finals? In the golf tournaments, do those who don't make it, say into the top three, feel like losers? Do we even remember the names of those who came in below those top three? I watch Jeopardy, and I wonder if the two who didn't make the top money feel like they have lost, rather than coming in second and third? It's all about getting ahead.

From my own family, I remember when my now grown up grandson, Dylan, was 10 years old, and was competing in a Go-Cart race in Kitchener. He had come from behind and was ahead to the very last turn, and then was overtaken by another driver. He was a very good second but, at the time, he cried because he had not come in first. Understandable, in a youngster, but I wonder how much of this feeling of failure is brought with us into older generations.

In all these examples, did the people concerned feel that they had 'lost' or that they had come in second or third in an important event. Had they 'lost' the World Series, the Green Jacket of golf renown, the big money in Jeopardy or, in the case of my young grandson, had he simply 'lost' the chance to be first, to be the winner?

Watching the current Olympic Games in Tokyo, are we so focused on the Gold medals that even Silver seems a let-down? Well, maybe not so much, but I did listen to an announcer with regard to Russian gymnast Nikita Nagornyy, who came in third - his comment was that Nikita had 'lost his chance to win'!

And recently, in a similar vein, as I watched the Royal Open golf championship in South England, an announcer made a comment about the golfer who was currently in second place, wondering if he would 'lose' the championship, hence not being first, was to lose.

It's all about getting ahead, being first, being a winner!

But what is our mandate as Christians? What is being Christian all about?

I do not believe it is carving out a place in Heaven. Jesus clearly wasn't concerned about his place in Heaven. Jesus was concerned about loving his God and loving his neighbor. Being Christian is about responding in kind, to the wonderful way we have been loved. It's about hospitality, reaching out, welcoming, about being inclusive, not so much about what we believe, as about what we do and how we live. Isn't it? It's about tolerance, accepting other religions, other beliefs, for if you study comparative religions, they all have more in common than they have diversity. It's about accepting that we are not all made the same and that no matter our colour, our ethnic background, our sexual orientation, our religion, we are ALL made in God's image. In a world so much in need of more love, more understanding, more acceptance, there is no room for hate....if only! Can't help but think of the words in the hymn "*and they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love*".

It seems to me that the world says we are to strive to be first, as individuals and as churches, to go for above market shares. Everyone else is to lose in the lottery, if we are to win. But Jesus says the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, and we know he's right even from our own experience. For most of us, I'll bet, recognize that our highs are not so much when we have financial or other good fortune, but when we can share it with someone. It's like the priest, and I'm sure some of you have heard this story, or is it a joke, about a priest who snuck out on a Sunday, when he should be doing what priests do on a Sunday, and who went golfing, and got a hole in one, but couldn't tell anyone. What good is it?

In our reading this morning, we hear how hard it is to find a capable wife! She is worth more than her weight in jewels! And these are the solemn words which King Lemuel's mother said to him, beginning "*you are my own dear son, the answer to my prayers. What shall I tell you?*"...and she goes on to give, at great length, a list of all the things a wife should do and be.

I think sometimes the virtuous or capable woman of Proverbs is looked upon as a bit of a patriarchal image of a woman slaving her heart out for her man. But might we not think of it as a wonderful image, not of a woman as a doormat, but of a visionary, caring, entrepreneurial woman who works very hard for the livelihood of her family, who develops very creative skills, who markets her product, who enjoys life. She's not into charm but authenticity, she's not pretentious, no façade, but personal and real.

Jesus has always stressed authenticity. He uplifts the realness and authenticity of a little child...and, getting back to my earlier comments on winning and losing, of course we celebrate the medal winners of the Olympics, the golf champions and

wisdom of the Jeopardy winner, and the driving skills of the Go-Cart driver. But surely we celebrate the more, all of those who trained for years to be good enough to represent their country, whether it be in soccer, or golf, or even in youthful Go-Kart racing? It wasn't just as a grandmother that I was thrilled when, in another race, Dylan got back in the race after rolling his Kart, and came in 4th out of 36. He could have come in last and I would still have been thrilled that he was able to finish the race at all.

But still, in our world, the emphasis is too much on winning.

So I would ask, why do we praise a Lord whom we might call the greatest who, it could be said, did not win, but was put to death? Could it be that because self-giving, investing in others, sharing values, dreaming of a whole earth, living love, is more soul-building than the self-oriented goals of the world and, indeed, all-too-often, of religion?

Again, the question - what is being Christian all about?

We each have our own answers, our own interpretation of what the Gospel means for us. We have to live our life in Christ in our own way. Times have been challenging in this past year or so, and we face more uncertainties as we move forward. We have our individual challenges, but we, as a community of caring Christians, are to do our best to respond as Christ would want us to.

In conclusion, I go back to my original question and the title of my sermon "**Who is the Greatest?**"

The one who proclaims, from the pulpit, God's word OR the one who regularly picks up a neighbour and drives them to the cancer clinic in Hamilton?

The one who owns the chain of doughnut shops OR the one who hands out free coffee to the bag lady who comes in once in a while out of the cold?

You get the picture - you just never know.

But I believe that in EVERY act of kindness, EVERY act of love, EVERY fight against injustice, we fulfill our destiny.

So what's our mission? To be the greatest? To be last? To be right? OR to take the risk of loving, to be a light to the world?

The thought I would leave with you this morning, you could call it your homework for the coming week, or weeks... mine too

As modern day Disciples of Christ, let us ponder what it means for us to be 'sent out' in Jesus' name... and as we do so,

God bless us....and make us a blessing!

Hymn: VU 299 "Teach Me, God, to Wonder"

I love the choral arrangement and piano accompaniment of "Teach Me, God, to Wonder" in this recording by Lamoni Heartland Mission Center in Iowa. If you wish to sing along, note that only verses 1, 2, and 4 are performed.

[CCS 176 Teach Me, God, to Wonder verses 1, 2, 4 - YouTube](#)

Teach me, God, to wonder, teach me, God, to see;
let your world of beauty capture me.

[Refrain] Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,
life be celebrated, joy you give.

Let me, God, be open, let me loving be;
let your world of people speak to me. *[R]*

Let me, God, be ready, let me be awake,
in your world of loving my place take. *[R]*

Teach me, God, to know you, hear you when you speak,
see you in my neighbor when we meet. *[R]*

Prayers of the People

You surround us with your blessings, God, and in turn, we respond with profound thanksgiving and name ways in which you bless us.

You are the One from whom all life flows. You have been named as Heavenly Father, strong of hand to guide us and uphold. You have been named as nurturing Mother Spirit, strong to shelter and enfold us in the bosom of your care. You have given us your Redeeming Son, strong of heart to draw us back to you. Thus you have been named and known to us, and thus you will always make yourself present, mothering and fathering our deepest selves.

To your parental care we bring the hurts and hopes of all your children.

We pray for all living in conditions that overwhelm them: the places where promising moments have had reversals, places where peace negotiations keep being undermined, places where mixed peoples who have lived together for generations are now split by bloody strife, places where the forces of nature, floods, fires,

earthquakes, tornados, famines and now a deadly coronavirus take a horrible human toll. We pray that the horrendous mistakes of the past, made by our country's government and our religious orders, will never be made again, and that we educate not just ourselves, but our children, to the inalienable rights and gifts of all people, regardless of differences in culture, religious beliefs, colour, sexual orientation, even gender.

We pray for the world, for all the people in situations we turn from, both near and far. We pray that the elements of hate that appear to be growing outrageously be eradicated by the love that underlies in all beliefs.

So many prayers, so many....

May you, the God of Creation, create in us new hope for the future, and may the Christ of the common road guide our every step....

We pray further, the familiar words of our family prayer....Our Father.... Amen

Hymn: MV 209 "Go, Make a Difference"

I've shared this recording before . . . because it's that good! I encourage you to sing your heart out with Steve Angrisano, co-composer of this hymn, and then, when done, don't be shy about hitting that replay button!

[Steve Angrisano - Go Make a Difference - YouTube](#)

[Refrain] Go make a diff'rence. We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
Go make a diff'rence. We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.

We are the salt of the earth, called to let the people see
the love of God for you and me.
We are the light of the world, not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a diff'rence in the world. *[R]*

We are the hands of Christ reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.
We are the spirit of hope; we are the voice of peace.
Go make a diff'rence in the world. *[R]*

So let your love shine on, let it shine for all to see.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
And the spirit of Christ will be with us as we go.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Benediction:

Go out this morning to your homes, touched in some way by this special time of being with God, and with each other,

Receive the blessing of God this day

Honour the living presence of Christ in your thoughts

and may the spirit of compassion instill in us a deep sense of caring for everyone we meet,

in our deeds

in our prayers

in our very being

this day, and always. Amen

Postlude: Carillon

Online Postlude: "We Are Pilgrims"

Thanks to Dora for discovering this newer composition by Catholic priests Randy Figuracion and Joselin Gonda, who I believe are both from the Philippines. The piece is sung in English, Cebuano, and Filipino.

[WE ARE PILGRIMS - YouTube](#)