

June 28, 2020 – Fourth Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our seventeenth online worship service. Re-opening preparations have continued during this week and last week and there is much yet to be done – a lot of it is in making sure our insurance requirements and Public Health requirements are met. The Risk Management Ministry team has a lot of work to do and could use some more disciples helping, so if you are able to help with some of the things that need doing, please get in touch with Donna Graham or Luis Gomes via the church office. The tasks will be on-going as we have some phases: beginning with re-opening for small groups (10 people or less), then making sure we have safe protocols worked out for our user groups (such as Immanuel City Church, TOPS, Scouts and Narcotics Anonymous, to name just a few), then re-opening our sanctuary for worship.

We are taking a “crawl before we walk” approach to re-opening to help us be as safety minded as possible, put all precautions in place, and keep all of us healthy in these unprecedented times. We are thankful for your patience, and in the upcoming Lamplighter, you will find much more information about our approach to re-opening, and what church for small groups will include.

Even though our building is closed, we continue to be a much sought after community with those on the pathway towards vocational ministry. Nicholas Stienberg, who joined us as a seminary placement student, is our preacher this week. Last week, Rev Dr. Joy Philips from our seminary in Waterloo got in touch with me about another possible student placement. This is a testament to our vibrance as a community even when we are not meeting in the usual ways, and I am thankful for this testament because it affirms what I have been saying all along: church is not the building, it is the people and their work in the harvest fields of the Kingdom of God ☺

Last week, I offloaded many administrative tasks around re-opening to various lay leaders, on council and beyond, so that I have more time and energy to focus on pastoral visits. I apologize in advance to those of you with whom I have not connected in so long; in the course of this week and next I will look to fill some visit slots. The safe preference is for outdoor visits whether on a porch or deck, under a tree or in a carport as this maximises our safety. If these spaces are not available to you, or you are unable to get to such a space, call me and we can set up a telephone visit. But I miss your faces and would love to have a safe outdoor visit where possible. Our picnic table at church is a great place to visit and I am happy to hold office there in suitable weather.

If you do not hear from me, it means I am relying on you to reach out to me by telephone, email (church phone 519-653-4721, text or cell call 519-588-7701 or by email pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org) or Facebook. We are in a season of a fire fighting model of pastoral care, where I am frequently responding rather than initiating. If you think someone needs a call or visit, you let me know and I will do my darnedest to make it happen.

You remain in my heart and my prayers – every single one of you ☺ And, as things are opened up, the COVID-19 virus remains alive and well. For us to likewise remain alive and well, precautions are advised: safe distancing, avid handwashing and polite consideration of and respect for the fears of others are, at this time, acts of love.

Please exercise these acts of love generously.

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

**Please take a few moments of silence, prepare your heart,
centre yourself for worship.**

Prelude: Land acknowledgement with Brad's creative composition ☺

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Zar8-GeUs>

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day:

Liberating Creator, all true freedom finds source in you. In your generous love, you have given us access to freedom in, with and through the light and the Way made available to us by Jesus. You give us an invitation: to be intimately linked in the harvest work of the coming complete freedom we know as the Kingdom of God. Help us to be obedient to your authority and trust in your teachings, to do the small things that lead to the bigger love that is you. Amen.

The Reading: Romans 6:12-23.

That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

So, since we're out from under the old tyranny, does that mean we can live any old way we want? Since we're free in the freedom of God, can we do anything that comes to mind? Hardly. You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you've started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in *his* freedom!

I'm using this freedom language because it's easy to picture. You can readily recall, can't you, how at one time the more you did just what you felt like doing—not caring about others, not caring about God—the worse your life became and the less freedom you had? And how much different is it now as you live in God's freedom, your lives healed and expansive in holiness?

As long as you did what you felt like doing, ignoring God, you didn't have to bother with right thinking or right living, or right *anything* for that matter. But do you call that a free life? What did you get out of it? Nothing you're proud of now. Where did it get you? A dead end.

But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is *real life*, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master. [The Message Translation]

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.**

Prayer of Confession:**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LupzAzeLIk>**Reading homework: Psalm 89 & Jeremiah 28**

Acclamation of the Word: Mindful that it is not currently deemed safe to sing together, if you are accessing this at home, please consider turning up the volume and singing along – the words are included on the youtube link (below the video)

Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia (ELW #364)**Text:** B. Kaymaanywa, H. S. Olson **Tune:** Tanzanian Traditional**Click here:** <https://youtu.be/gqbD58GJAQk>

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The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 10: 40-42.***C: Glory to you O Lord.***

"We are intimately linked in this harvest work. Anyone who accepts what you do, accepts me, the One who sent you. Anyone who accepts what I do accepts my Father, who sent me. Accepting a messenger of God is as good as being God's messenger. Accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help. This is a large work I've called you into, but don't be overwhelmed by it. It's best to start small. Give a cool cup of water to someone who is thirsty, for instance. The smallest act of giving or receiving makes you a true apprentice. You won't lose out on a thing." [The Message Translation]

The Gospel of our Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.******Meditation (Nicholas Stienberg):****Click here to hear Nick proclaim the sermon:** <https://youtu.be/uTpDKzBoAts>

Hello all! What a pleasure it is to be sharing the Word with you once again. It has been long since many of us have seen each other, but I hope and pray that all are well and surviving in these troubling times.

Now, that brings me to something I got to wondering while I was writing this. In the lectionary, these weeks are described as "Proper" in the season after Pentecost. I am sure there is a perfectly valid reason for that, but it struck me as odd given the times we are living through. Nothing does seem proper after all with the way of the world right now. To highlight that a friend of mine recently quipped that this is the only time he has ever been encouraged to wear a mask into a bank.

As I was sitting with our readings this week I got to wondering about this whole "proper" idea. When I was younger I would be told to act proper because it was the right thing to do. Sit still, don't harass your brother, don't talk while the adults are talking. I am sure we all remember being taught what is proper in life, in behaviour, in society. I think what has made this whole pandemic hard is that what is proper is being redefined. How big our social circle is, how far back we stand, wearing face coverings, and even coughing in public has all taken a change. We are being made by something beyond our control to rethink much about how we live as a society in the face of an unseeable force.

There is also much to ponder in the news as all across this country and to the south, people are demanding a change to how we police society and value the lives of others. Here there is great concern over how we care for the elderly in homes. Even the economic foundation of our society is under question as the rich get richer and millions are without work. What is and was proper is no longer the same and many ask what the new “normal” will look like. Will we hug in church or shake hands anymore? Shall we all be developing a new fashionable sense of masks? How will we deal with so many people needing work, but also to be socially distanced?

Questions like this are difficult to ponder because it is asking us to rethink everything we know and assume, it demands change of us. When we look at what Paul and Jesus are saying this week, it deals with similar themes. Paul is talking to the people of Rome about how they used to live, slaves to desires that were harmful to them. Now, given this was the biggest city in the world at the time and unemployment and poverty was rampant, we can only imagine what people were slaves to, and of course there were actual slaves in the picture who were doing much of the work the unemployed likely wished they could be doing. For many people of Rome being stuck in idleness with limited money was a way of life, not just a season.

Paul would have been looking at a city that we could understand. In Rome there was always something tense going on be it rich vs poor, foreigners vs citizens, and just casual brutality from the powers that be. People would have felt unsure, and if there was one thing about living in the early years after Christ that was common it was a level of uncertainty in everything. For Romans there always seemed to be one problem or another, and by the time Paul was writing this letter they had just lived through Caligula, one of the more insane leaders of Rome. Disease was also rampant in that city, as it was crowded and dirty with a population in the hundreds of thousands.

So Paul comes to this city and he starts to talk about freedom. Now, freedom would have been an important concept to the Romans because if you weren’t free, you were a slave, property. Even the poorest person in Rome viewed themselves as better than a slave, so to be told that you were not free would be jarring to free people. Paul however was saying this so that people would understand what it meant to be owned by sin, owned by personal and social evils and having them overpower us. So instead he speaks of the freedom in God’s way.

Now, God’s way is probably not what you and I, or even wider society, might call “proper”. God’s way invites us to think more about others than ourselves, and when we are thinking of ourselves it asks not to push and punish yourself, but to be patient and learn to love yourself as God does. It is also not a static way, but one that is constantly pushing back against “normalcy” by inviting us to consider ever greater love and care for the wider world around us. It asks us to have self control, compassion, and mercy, because it is what God has given to us without condition.

In Matthew, I really want to highlight part of Chapter 10:40 in The Message translation. Jesus says “We are intimately linked in this harvest work”. What a powerful statement, we aren’t working alone, we aren’t working against one another, but in preparing the way for the Kingdom of God we are all in this together. That has become the new proper in society after all, the constant refrain that we are all in this together.

With that in mind we must ask ourselves, are we? Standing on the verge of such changes that our society is about to enter, can we truly say we are all in this together? The answer may be no, at least right now, but we are invited to be! Change is an absolutely terrible and stressful thing at times, and change like we see now is perhaps the scariest as rules we have always known go out the window. But change doesn’t have to be bad, it can be something that brings us together much more strongly than we used to be bound before. If there is one thing many of us have learned in the last few months surely it is to value our relationships with one another much more.

So what will this new proper look like? God invites us to find out not as passive observers, but drivers of that change. As the world wrestles with the after effects of everything happening right now we are without a doubt looking at new ideas of what is proper and what is normal. Are we going to do the same things we have always done, or are we going to return to our social spaces with a renewed energy for God’s ways. The ways of peace, patience, compassion, forgiveness, and so much more. As we carry on this week let us remember this call, but also how intimately we are linked together in this work for a new normal.

May God bless and keep you all, may he refresh your spirits in the knowledge that we are saved by Christ and that we do not walk alone but in the constant company of the Holy Spirit. Amen sisters and brothers in Christ.

Hymn of the Day – #588 There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy

Click here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKxQTuwmdKc>

Prayers of Intercession

In this time of COVID-19 lockdown finally re-opening, and heightened awareness about systemic racism, we come before God remembering that all of us are loved, and children of God. We come knowing that all of creation is held in God’s hands. We ask God to dwell with us and hear our prayers.

All-powerful God,
Throughout creation, your diversity is demonstrated:
In each face, in every life form,
In each sunrise, in every snowflake.
This life-form we know as COVID-19 has transformed our entire world.
Help us to act with love, patience, and kindness as we seek to re-open safely.
Teach us to listen to each other with compassion, to hear concerns with empathy,
And to respond with gentleness, so that hearts and souls as well as bodies are kept safe.
God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

Jesus, our brother and fellow traveller,
 You intimately know the violence of human encounter with differences.
 You know what Chantel Moore and George Floyd experienced in their dying minutes.
 With your body on the cross, these differences were broken:
 Jew and Greek, Slave and free.
 Every shade made precious in your sight.
 Help us to honour your sacrifice by doing the work of your body:
 Help us to dismantle the use of difference for disprivilege.
 God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire,
 You burst forth in flames, to the early followers of Jesus.
 You gave different languages, and sparked fires of love:
 That all your earth might know the good news of Jesus.
 Diversity was your vehicle, diversity was your canvas.
 May we trust in your power knit throughout our differences.
 May we trust in your power knit throughout our common experiences.
 Fill us with your capacity for making common the message of love.
 Let our differences be your chalk and chalkboard.
 Be our guiding presence in this holy work,
 God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

In all our hearts, holy One, you place the nudge of your calls.
 You move us in all kinds of ways, with all kinds of concerns.
 Whether for creation, climate or individuals ...
 Whether for the church, the world or local situations ...
 We call out our concerns to you here ... out loud or in the silence of our hearts.
 God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers. And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray:

Lord's Prayer:

Click here for our familiar sung version, with Brad on organ, and Helga singing:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKpchRaebQ>

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Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
 thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread;
 and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

While you listen to the offertory hymn, continue your prayers and consider how you may be an offering in the coming week.

**Offertory – Nun Bitten Wir ELW 743, Buxtehude Bux WV 208;
 Bradley Moggach, Organ**

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXxMoKA-WnQ>

Offering Prayer

God of all abundance, receive our brokenness and the offering of our lives.

Take us, who return to you in thanksgiving: form us and shape us into a love like Jesus, so that we may be love for this broken world. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn: Go Now in Peace (Brad on Piano, Helga singing)

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZpzrzLkz70>

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Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us.

May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.

May God look upon us with favor

and give us ☩ peace.

Amen.

Dismissal: Go in Peace, Go in Hope. ***Thanks be to God.***