

September 20, 2020 – 16th Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our twenty-ninth online worship service ☺ Last Sunday, weather did not allow us to have our gathering on the lawn, but I am hopeful that this Sunday, weather will allow us to have that time for fellowship and conversation – weather permitting, 10 to 11 am, bring your lawn chair and complete your toileting before coming out because our church is not yet sanitized for re-opening.

On Friday September 11th, 2020 we laid our beloved brother in Christ, Uncle Otto Kiefer to rest. Once again it felt for me like a double loss: Uncle Otto's death, and the absence of our church community. Today's meditation is shared from Uncle Otto's funeral service, as a means of supporting our congregational bereavement process, as well as being a reflection through the lens of Ecclesiastes 3, on the times we find ourselves in.

Today we are also able to share with you some fair projections for church re-opening. We hope to have our training of volunteer disciples happen on Wednesday, Sept. 23rd 6-7:30 pm for Train the Trainers, and Thursday, Sept. 24th 7-7:30 pm, and Sunday Sept. 27th 11 am – 12 pm for the Greeter and Usher Training. These will be done inside the church building which is undergoing a deep clean and sanitization this week. Volunteer disciples are to gain access through the Church Street accessible entrance only.

We hope to have a "soft re-opening", by invitation only, for council and lay-leaders, on October 4th. The purpose of this soft reopening is to identify and work out any glitches in our safe entry, seating, worship and exit protocols for our Sunday worship. We are giving ourselves a fortnight after that to work out glitches before we hope to welcome the congregation back for worship on Sunday October 18th. Please keep this schedule in your prayers, asking for guidance according to God's will.

Before we re-open, we need to have a roster for at least 4 Sundays of volunteer disciples in place, beginning on October 18th, so that we are prepared to continue with worship, if we are not placed in lockdown conditions again based on rising infection rates. If you have not yet volunteered or been called on specifically, but are interested in helping – please contact Hazel & Nyle (519-653-2901) or the church office (519-653-4721).

More details on our re-opening protocols and requirements will be included in the Lamplighter which Lorre and I are striving to get ready for you, working on content this weekend, for publication as soon as possible. It will also offer options for in-person adult study opportunities, and in-person home communion where you get to be the altar guild ☺ So lots of excitement coming at you very shortly!

One of the items we need to supply for the COVID safe cleaning requirements are throw-away "rags" or wiping cloths. They will be dampened with COVID-safe solution, and used to sanitize, both by our custodial contractor and by our volunteer disciples. Most of us have old sheets, linens and towels which could be re-purposed for this use. We are asking that you donate any spare sheets, linens and towels that could be used in this way, freshly laundered, to our church. Drop off may be done at front porches at these locations: 23 Shade Street in Galt and 746 Regent Street in Preston. We will cut them into the appropriate sizes, so that we have a ready stock handy. If you are looking for an outing, maybe check out the thrift stores near you for items we could use, and consider purchasing some to share with church as a donation. They don't need to be brand new, just clean.

As always, if you need a phone call or distanced visits, please do reach out by email or phone: pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org or 519-653-4721 ... It is not my intention to neglect pastoral visitation ministry during this time, sometimes my shins just need a kick ☺

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

I want to offer a word of thanks for those of you who have allowed us to use your photos, or who have offered the use of your photos in the creation of our music videos. It truly adds to our worshipping community and makes worship more of a 'group effort'. It's not too late to get in on the fun! If you have some photos you might like to send along, please be in touch with me by email, lorre.calder@sympatico.ca . We can arrange how best to co-ordinate access to your photos. Full credit will of course be given.

—Lorre Calder

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: Holy God, You have made your world so that there is room in it for every season under the sun, and every emotion, and every human experience. Help us to rest in the knowledge that, where ever we find ourselves, even if sad, grieving, anxious or morose – there YOU are. Help us to know that Jesus walks with us always. Amen.

The Lesson: Exodus 16:1-15

On the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt, the whole company of Israel moved on from Elim to the Wilderness of Sin which is between Elim and Sinai. The whole company of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron there in the wilderness. The Israelites said, "Why didn't God let us die in comfort in Egypt where we had lamb stew and all the bread we could eat? You've brought us out into this wilderness to starve us to death, the whole company of Israel!"

God said to Moses, "I'm going to rain bread down from the skies for you. The people will go out and gather each day's ration. I'm going to test them to see if they'll live according to my Teaching or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they have gathered, it will turn out to be twice as much as their daily ration."

Moses and Aaron told the People of Israel, "This evening you will know that it is God who brought you out of Egypt; and in the morning you will see the Glory of God. Yes, he's listened to your complaints against him. You haven't been complaining against us, you know, but against God."

Moses said, "Since it will be God who gives you meat for your meal in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, it's God who will have listened to your complaints against him. Who are we in all this? You haven't been complaining to us—you've been complaining to God!" Moses instructed Aaron: "Tell the whole company of Israel: 'Come near to God. He's heard your complaints.'" When Aaron gave out the instructions to the whole company of Israel, they turned to face the wilderness. And there it was: the Glory of God visible in the Cloud.

God spoke to Moses, "I've listened to the complaints of the Israelites. Now tell them: 'At dusk you will eat meat and at dawn you'll eat your fill of bread; and you'll realize that I am God, *your* God.' That evening quail flew in and covered the camp and in the morning there was a layer of dew all over the camp. When the layer of dew had lifted, there on the wilderness ground was a fine flaky something, fine as frost on the ground. The Israelites took one look and said to one another, *man-hu* (What is it?). They had no idea what it was. So Moses told them, "It's the bread God has given you to eat. (The Message Translation)

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

Reading Homework: Matthew 20 and Psalm 145

Acclamation of the Word: Hymn #793 **Be Thou My Vision**

Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvNjGlp6K5M>

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The Holy Scriptures according to Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

C: Glory to you O Lord.

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.
What gain have the workers from their toil?
I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.
He has made everything suitable for its time;
moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds,
yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.
I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy
and enjoy themselves as long as they live;
moreover, it is God's gift:
that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. [NRSV]
Word of God, Word of Life: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon (by Pastor Janaki)

Click here: <https://youtu.be/ncx39lwlo8c> to access the audio of the sermon, or imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here:

This has been a challenging week for many of us, as schools re-opened, and if you have children you prepared for schooling, whether at home or at school to resume. Those of you who work in the education system had a roller coaster week. Those of you who are grandparents may have had to tend to the small-sizing of bubbles as your grandchildren became more likely to be a source of exposure. It has been a full week – and today's reading reminds us that all of this is part of God's reality in creation.

This Ecclesiastes scripture was also used to celebrate Uncle Otto Kiefer's life. You who are worshiping at home today may not have known Uncle Otto personally. Yet I am sure each one of us will be holding to particular memories of loved ones who have died in the past year in our hearts and minds. We might be sitting with a mix of emotions: sadness about the loss, maybe a bit of shock where death was unexpected, and the joy of having known the one(s) who have gone ahead and their unique ways ☺ Our feelings of mourning are mixed with the complexities of grieving in these unprecedented times, when everything feels

risky, even the simple acts of holding a hand or giving a hug. Many of our formerly normal ways of expressing comfort and a shared sorrow amongst each other are limited because of COVID safety measures, and this brings a whole new set of feelings into the grieving landscape: anxiety, fear and maybe even anger that we are not able to even mourn in peace (if that be a thing), due to this darn COVID business.

The reading from Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is room for all these feelings in our human experience ... we are designed to feel and Ecclesiastes gives us that reassurance:

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

It seems the writer of this wisdom reading understood very clearly about not only life and death and grieving, but also about pandemics: a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing indeed. In the world of psychology and psychotherapy, these words function to normalize our experiences ... the words reassure us that it is normal for everything to have it's season, and help us to be reminded that everything we are feeling is as it should be, and that this is simply a time to sit with these feelings in this season of life, until we move gently on ... for the reading continues

a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Uncle Otto, who lived to celebrate his 92nd birthday, lived through so many experiences: born in Karlsruhe, Germany, he was a familiar with the realities of war, and had that context from which to appreciate peace. As his pastor, I witnessed his commitment to celebration of thanksgiving and life by his regular attendance at church, even when his own mobility and hearing proved challenging. But he was not shy, when our dodgy speakers at church would kick out, to wave his hand and holler "can't hear you" loudly enough that I would know it was time to fidget with my mic.

Andrew and Karen (grandnephew and niece respectively) shared this story with me, which tells me that Uncle Otto's hollering was not unique to my sermons ☺ "One of his biggest comments was on the volume / sound of things. He refused to wear hearing aids so you knew you would have to talk loudly. He would routinely turn the volume up on his TV and let everyone know he was home in the apartments next to him. He was also never afraid to yell "Speak Up" if you were not talking loudly and that even included in church."

I cannot speak to Uncle Otto's having hated (although I venture to guess he probably hated the sound system at church) but he certainly had his time to love; his dear wife Margot, and his nieces, nephews and family were all recipients of his very own, practical ways of loving. Although his time to live mortally is done, his time to love continues, as you may remember from last Sunday's reading from Corinthians, "love never ends."

As a long-time resident of Cambridge (Preston), and a retiree from GE in Guelph, I am sure Uncle Otto had a solid understanding of the next few lines in the Ecclesiastes reading:

What gain have the workers from their toil?

I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.
He has made everything suitable for its time;
moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds,
yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

That last line reminds us of life's mystery ... we "cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end" ... if you are anything like me, the questions not only about unexpected deaths like Uncle Otto's, but questions about so many things in our world today arise: why now? Why this pandemic now? Why so many weather disasters now? Why the violence in the world? Why?

But we cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. We draw close to God as a means of reassurance, that we are in good relationship with the author and finisher of all life and creation – and that faithfulness I know Uncle Otto lived.

The last piece of this Ecclesiastes reading reminds us to seek a joyful and positive mindset in the midst of the things we do not know and cannot understand:

I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy
and enjoy themselves as long as they live;
moreover, it is God's gift:
that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.

Many of you may know Uncle Otto was diabetic, but that did not stop him (if my sermon was short enough) for staying after worship service on Sunday for a cookie or a piece of cake. Andrew shared with me that: "At supper time he would always complain that he was NOT hungry, however when dessert was offered he would suddenly become hungry and ask for seconds even though he was diabetic and needed to watch his sugar." ... I think Uncle Otto understood the somewhat fleeting nature of life, and the value of embracing life's pleasures when it was possible ... this was also demonstrated in his love of gardening, Oktoberfesting and "the Leafs".

There is much reassurance in the Word of God that we are doing exactly what we need to be doing, living through this pandemic: mourning death together, encountering rising infection rates, school re-opening, re-sizing our social bubbles and celebrating life well lived. It may not yet feel normal to us, but it is all part of the normalcy present in God's creation. Let us continue to keep safe, and keep close to God: the author and finisher of all life and creation. Amen.

Hymn of the Day Arise My Soul ELW #827

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1V7AinwJHk>

Text: Johan Karl/ Tr. Ernest Ryden, Dale Wood; Finnish Folk Tune

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The main prayer below was accessed through the Xavier University website, at:

<https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/coronavirus-prayers> and written by Sister Christine Koelhoffer, IHM. The final two petitions were added based on our context for this Sunday.

A Coronavirus Prayer:

Loving God, Your desire is for our wholeness and well being.

We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time.

We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened.

We ache for ourselves and our neighbors, standing before an uncertain future.

We pray: may love, not fear, go viral.

Inspire our leaders to discern and choose wisely, aligned with the common good.

Help us to practice social distancing and reveal to us new and creative ways to come together in spirit and in solidarity.

Call us to profound trust in your faithful presence,

You, the God who does not abandon.

We add to these prayers our prayers for the all those who have now returned to school,
And for those who have lost beloved family members in the past weeks:

May your Spirit walk alongside them to comfort them.

We pray that you would also keep us in good spirits, as we feel the colder weather coming,
And as we contend with the reality of rising infection rates ... please keep us in your care.

We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

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 – Flute Sonata in B Minor J S Bach; Bradley Moggach, Piano, Gregory Stroh, Flute

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpEuz9x8UMw>

Offering Prayer

God of goodness and growth,

all creation is yours,

and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

Water and word, social distancing and hand-washing:

these are signs of your abundant grace.

Nourish us through these gifts,

that we might proclaim your steadfast love

in our communities and in the world,

through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn: Will You Let Me Be Your Servant ELW 659; Text & Music Richard Gillard; Bradley Moggach, Piano

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

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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.***

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