

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP:

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me, and know my thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*
Let us worship God.

(Psalm 139.23-24)

PRAYER OF APPROACH AND CONFESSION:

Immortal and invisible God:

We thank you that you reveal yourself to us in the words of scripture, and most of all, in the person, teaching, and actions of Jesus, your Son. As we worship you now, help us to be open, receptive, and responsive to your revelation of yourself.

We confess, however, that we are often resistant to your revelation. We prefer to see you as we *like* to see you rather than as you truly are. We resist being influenced by you, and prefer to be shaped by our instincts and desires. We look to you to fulfill our desires, rather than placing ourselves at your service.

Forgive us, we pray, for we have sinned.

As we worship you now, continue revealing yourself to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Help us then also to allow ourselves to be shaped by your revelation of yourself, so that we may come to resemble you more and more; so that we may live more faithfully in your ways; and so that we may serve you ever more effectively.

We pray in the name of Jesus, our Savior, and we pray *together*, now, as he taught us:

Our Father, which art in heaven:

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

*Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil;*

*for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever. Amen.*

(Matthew 6.9-13, KJV)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Hear this good news from the scriptures:

*God made Jesus, who had no sin,
share our sin,
so that in him,
we might share God's righteousness.*

(2 Corinthians 5.21)

So, if we have confessed our sin to God sincerely,
let us be assured that God will forgive us.

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

- **Old Testament Reading:** 1 Samuel 3.1-21 - God calls Samuel

This is one of the classic “call” stories in the Bible — the one in which God calls to Samuel in the middle of the night.

Samuel was still a boy at this time, and served in the temple, under the priest Eli. This wasn't the temple in Jerusalem, but an earlier temple in a place called Shiloh. Eli had two sons who also were priests, but they were corrupt, and abused their priestly authority.

The *message* that Samuel receives from God in this story is one of rebuke and condemnation for Eli and his sons.

- **Psalm:** Psalm 139 - “You have searched me, LORD”.

Psalm 139 appears to be the prayer of a person who has been falsely accused of being unfaithful to God.

In declaring his innocence, the writer speaks eloquently of God's all-encompassing knowledge of him, and of the fact that God is everywhere.

There is a link between this psalm and today's *Gospel* reading in the fact that Jesus knew all about Nathanael before even meeting him.

- **Letter Reading:** 1 Corinthians 6.12-20 - “Flee from sexual immorality”

In this reading, Paul discusses the tension between freedom and responsibility, specifically as it relates to sexual behavior.

In his discussion, Paul quotes a couple of things that the people in Corinth have apparently said in *justifying* their promiscuous behavior.

- **Gospel Reading:** John 1.43-51 - Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael

In this reading, John tells the story of how two men named Philip and Nathanael joined the growing circle of Jesus' disciples.

SERMON [by Raymond Reichelt - see separate document]

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

God of love and grace:

We give you thanks for the love with which you reach out to us to draw us into relationship with you. We thank you that you love us even though you know all about us; even though you see all our faults and shortcomings. We thank you also for the faith you show in us, by calling us to do a variety of tasks to help you accomplish your purpose in the world. Help us to be like Samuel, who spoke the message you had given him for Eli. Help us to be like Philip and Nathanael, who understood who Jesus was, and became his disciples. Forgive us for times when we see you mainly as one who can do things for us that we can't do for ourselves; and to see ourselves rather as your people and representatives in the world, speaking and acting as you lead and equip us to.

We thank you for your church — the worldwide community of your people, of which our congregations are only a small part. As we observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity this year, we renew our prayer for unity within the church: that we may recognize that the things we have in common as people of various denominations are much more significant than the things that separate us. Help us to overcome feelings of hostility and rivalry, and show us how we can work in cooperation with each other rather than in competition with each other — especially in today's society, in which people are becoming increasingly secular and atheistic. We pray also for unity within denominations and within congregations — that we may not allow differences of opinion or taste to cause conflict and division that only undermines the church's ministry and its credibility.

We thank you for your care for us — for providing the things we need, and for giving us strength and guidance as we face various difficulties. We pray for those especially in need of your care today — in particular, Philip and Margaret Dunn and their extended family in Calgary, in the death of their brother-in-law, Dennis Walters; as well as others whom we name before you now: _____. Grant each one your comfort, healing, strength, and encouragement, we pray.

We continue to pray about the COVID-19 pandemic. We give you thanks that the numbers here in Manitoba have been decreasing, and that hospitals are once again able to do some elective surgery. We pray for wisdom as our leaders make decisions this week about the possible easing of some restrictions. Help us not to let our guard down, however, and help us to maintain a long-term view of this crisis. We pray for parts of the country — and other parts of the world — where the situation is much more serious, and medical staff are stressed and overworked. Guide those in authority in determining what kind of restrictions need to be imposed; and enable the public to see the logic in imposing them.

We pray for students and teachers returning to in-class learning this week, and ask your blessing upon them as once more they need to adjust to changed circumstances.

We give thanks once again that vaccines are being made available, and we ask your blessing

on efforts to vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible.

As a new president and vice president are inaugurated in the United States this week, we pray for the safety of everyone involved in the inauguration ceremony; and we pray also for your blessing on the new administration, as it takes over the leadership of the country.

We pray about the issue of white supremacy, both in the United States and here in Canada, that it may be resisted and challenged, and that, increasingly, there may be equal opportunities and equal treatment for people of all races.

We pray also for people in crisis because of natural disasters, in particular the recent earthquake in Indonesia and the famine in Madagascar. We pray that adequate aid may be forthcoming from the international community, to provide support and assistance to those in need.

We thank you for hearing our prayers, gracious God, and we offer them up to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING:

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Go into the week ahead

in peace,

and in the strength of the Holy Spirit,

to continue listening for God's word,

and following his direction.

And may God bless you:

May he guide, strengthen, and equip you to do what pleases him,

and may he give you his peace and joy;

in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.