

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP:

*The LORD upholds the cause of the oppressed,
and gives food to the hungry.*

*The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.*

*The LORD watches over the foreigner,
and sustains the fatherless and the widow.*

(Psalm 146.7-9, ad.)

Let us worship God.

HYMN: Sing praise to God, who reigns above!

PRAYER OF APPROACH AND CONFESSION:

Living and life-giving God:

We gather as your people, ready to do your will. We gather as your children, who have learned to love because you loved us first. We gather as disciples, prepared to imitate Jesus' loving actions.

In Jesus Christ, you have shown us compassion and boundless grace. You have shown us how to love each other. You are the Creator of heaven and earth, and we are creatures, yet you have called each one of us by name. You are the Holy One, yet you sent your Son to serve us.

In awe and wonder, we listen for your word; we wait for your call; we prepare ourselves to serve you and all the world.

Yet, we confess that we fall short of your expectations when it comes to loving others. We limit the number of people we care about, and we place limits on what we will do for others. We too easily blame people's misfortunes on their own actions, thinking that it will relieve us of the responsibility to give support or assistance.

Forgive us, we pray, for failing to love as you love; and, through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, help us to do better.

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Matthew 6.9-13, KJV)

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Hear this good news from the scriptures:

*This is how God showed his love among us:
he sent his only Son into the world
so that we might live through him.*

*This is love: not that we have loved God,
but that he loved us,
and sent his Son to be the sacrifice that pays for our sins.*

(1 John 4.9-10)

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

- OT Reading: Leviticus 19.1-2, 9-18 - Various commandments

In this passage, God gives the people of Israel various commandments. They all have to do with how the Israelites are to treat each other. The final one is the well-known commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself".

- Psalm: Psalm 146 - "Praise the LORD, my soul!"

Psalm 146 is a psalm of praise, in which the writer celebrates God's power, compassion, and faithfulness, and encourages people to put their trust in him.

Note in particular what the writer says about God's care for people who vulnerable and powerless.

- NT Reading: Mark 12.28-34 - The most important commandment(s)

In this passage, Jesus is asked which commandment is the greatest. He answers by quoting not just one commandment, but two.

HYMN: Praise to the Lord, all of you, his servants!

SERMON [See separate document]

HYMN: Christ, you call us all to service

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

God of mercy and justice:

You love your creation intimately and passionately. You revealed your love in Jesus Christ, as he lived among us human beings, and as he suffered and died for our benefit. Jesus redefined love forever. To love each other is to give of ourselves. To love each other is to suffer in behalf of others. When we love each other with passion and generosity, we demonstrate our gratitude and love for you.

We ask for courage and wisdom to serve others in humility, and without counting the cost. When we cross boundaries, when we encounter other cultures, help us to be good listeners and willing partners. Kindle in us a vivid imagination, so that we can serve even those whom we cannot see or hear.

We ask your blessing on the work done by Presbyterian World Service & Development. Give to its staff a strong sense of your presence and purpose. May the partners of PWS&D around the world flourish, and discover creative solutions for their many challenges: the scarcity of food, the abuse of human rights, the powerful forces of nature, unemployment and poverty.

May those who are most vulnerable be blessed with a sense not only of your presence, but also of our willingness to serve. Help us to care about them, and to love them concretely, so that lives may be transformed.

We pray for members of our congregation, our families, and our circles of friends who are experiencing difficulties of various kinds; in particular, those whom we now name before you: _____ . Grant to each one a sense of your presence, we pray, to sustain and encourage them. Grant them also your blessings of strength, guidance, or healing, according to their situation and their needs. Guide and equip us, too, as we seek appropriate ways to give support to those around us who are hurting.

We pray also for the world around us. We pray again about the polarization taking place in our country and other parts of the world, by which people become intolerant of and hostile toward those who hold opinions different from their own. We pray that we all may be concerned about where this may lead. We pray that people may respect the views of others, even if they don't agree with them, and may engage in respectful conversation with each other, rather than angry and divisive rhetoric.

In that regard, we continue to pray about the ongoing protests over vaccination mandates and various other issues in various parts of the country. We pray for wisdom for federal, provincial, and municipal governments as they respond to this crisis, as well as for police forces, whose responsibility it is to maintain law and order. We pray that protesters may be persuaded to dismantle their blockades, and to pursue means of protest that are not disruptive to the public.

We continue to pray also about the tension in Eastern Europe between Russia and Ukraine. We pray for wisdom for leaders of the international community as they respond to this crisis, that a way may be found to resolve the situation without violence.

We pray once again about the pandemic. We give thanks that numbers of infections and hospitalizations appear to be decreasing, and that governments are feeling that they can once again ease various restrictions. We pray that people may remain prudent, however, and not become careless.

And, as we continue to experience cold winter weather, we once again give thanks for those who work outdoors in the cold to provide the services we depend on, and we pray for their safety. We pray also for those who are homeless, that adequate shelter may be provided for them, so that they are not left to the mercy of the elements.

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

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:

Gracious and generous God:

In love, you provide for our needs, for which we are very grateful. We are grateful as well for ways in which we experience your love in the actions of people around us — acts of kindness, helpfulness, support, and generosity. We are particularly grateful for the ministry of Jesus, through which you demonstrated the full extent of your love.

In gratitude, then, we respond to your love by joining you in the work you are doing the world; and we present to you our offerings now as a way of supporting that work. We ask you, then, to guide, bless, and prosper the work that our offerings will support, both nearby and far away.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

HYMN: For the healing of the nations ...

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING:

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Go into the week ahead, now,

in peace,

and in the strength of the Holy Spirit,

to continue acting in ways

that are consistent with loving God

and loving our neighbors.

And may God bless you:

May he guide and inspire you each day,

and give you his strength and peace;

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