

## Welcome and Announcements

### Introduction of the worship leaders

We respect the treaties that were made on these lands and acknowledge that First Presbyterian Church in Portage la Prairie is on Treaty 1 Lands and First Presbyterian, and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Churches in what we call Brandon, Manitoba are located on Treaty 2 Lands -- the traditional homelands of the Dakota, Anishanabek, Oji-Cree, Cree, Dene and Metis peoples. This is where we live and work peacefully on land shared with us for us for the common good. We are grateful.

In prayer this week we ask that you remember

- Farmers and gardeners affected by drought or flooding from excessive rain.
- All those affected by the high temperatures.
- First responders and essential workers
- People who are ill in body, mind or spirit, those newly diagnosed, the ones who are waiting for tests or treatment or recovering from treatment. We pray that those who are approaching death may do so confident in God's faithful presence and mercy.
- We ask God's comfort for who grieve and strength to face the coming days.

I have a couple events to mention that begin in September that I want you to be alert to:

The Presbytery of Brandon is offering as series of four workshops for ministers and elders on Thursdays at 1:30pm. The Rev Tim Purvis, Associate Secretary Ministry and Church Vocations with the Presbyterian Church in Canada hosts a 4 part online webinar: "Soul Weariness: Spiritual and Mental Health for Clergy and Elders" September 9, Sept 23, Oct 7 and Oct 21 at 1:30pm

And

The Fall Bible Study at St. Andrew's will be "Singing Our Lives": a Bible Study that explores how singing hymns lift our hearts to adore God and speaks God's transforming love for our world.

Begins every other Thursday starting September 16 at 7:00 pm for six sessions (this will be by correspondence, in person or via zoom depending on what restrictions are in place at that time).

To register for either of these event contact Glenn Ball at 204-570-1390 or [rgball@mymts.net](mailto:rgball@mymts.net) .

At First Presbyterian Church in Brandon on Thursdays we have a drop in coffee fellowship time on the lawn – weather permitting. Come by at 10:30 with a lawn chair and a mug. We will provide the coffee.

Now, let us turn our hearts and minds to worship:

### **Responsive Call to Worship**

One: In moments of anxiety, God leads us to still waters.

**All: O God, we come to you.**

One: In moments of confusion, God leads us in right paths.

**All: O God, we come to hear your voice.**

One: In moments of loneliness, God is with us.

**All: O God, we come into your presence, seeking your love.**

One: In all our moments, God is with us.

**All: So we come to praise the One who restores our lives.**

Hymn: #410 Joyful, joyful, we adore you

### Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

God our Maker, in summer we easily marvel at the world you have made, the colours of sunrise and sunset filling the horizon, the intricate beauty of flower gardens and natural parks, the quiet dignity of a river in its course, and the steadfast presence of a rock face carved over time.

You show us how each small piece of your creation depends in many ways on all the others. Summer growth depends on spring rains; health for each creature depends on the wise balance you have set between each species; the quality of life on the respect we show one another.

Wise and patient God, we marvel at the world you love. Our worship joins the songs of all creation to bring you praise, honouring you and the relationships you have set between us all, through Christ, firstborn of all creation. **Amen.**

**God our Maker, as we marvel at your creation, we confess we often take it for granted. We don't know what to make of reports about the damage human life causes. We prefer to live as if our lifestyles make no impact on the earth. We confess we don't really want to change.**

**Yet we wonder if the way we live is pleasing to you. For all the ways we put your creation at risk and harm the earth, we ask for your forgiveness. For all the ways we put other people at risk and harm communities, we ask for your forgiveness.**

**Teach us how to live in this marvellous world and with each other with justice, love and respect for you, all human beings and for your whole creation.**

Hear us now as we continue our prayer using the words Jesus taught us:

**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. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. 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.**

Assurance of Pardon:

Jesus Christ has come to proclaim peace to those of us who are far off from God. He makes of himself a bridge for those who are far away, reconciling them to God. To all who humbly repent and desire to be granted new life in Christ, I say again, Be at peace. Your sin is forgiven. New life has begun. Begin the journey to be reconciled to God and to one another. Thanks be to God for this great mercy.

Children's Time: (Kathy Lancaster)

Hymn: #655 Give me oil in my lamp

Prayer for Understanding:

Move among us with your Spirit, O God, and prepare our hearts and minds to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own, that hearing you, we may obey your will and follow your ways in the example of Jesus Christ, the Living Word. **Amen.**

Scripture:

2 Samuel 7:1-14a

7 <sup>1</sup> Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup> the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup> Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup> But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup> Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup> I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup> Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders<sup>[a]</sup> of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

<sup>8</sup> Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup> and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

<sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.

## Ephesians 2:11-22

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth,<sup>[a]</sup> called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

<sup>15</sup> He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile both groups to God in one body<sup>[b]</sup> through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>17</sup> So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup> for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>21</sup> In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together spiritually<sup>[a]</sup> into a dwelling place for God.

Responsive Psalm 89:20-37

L: I have found my servant David; with my holy oil I have anointed him;

P: **my hand shall always remain with him; my arm also shall strengthen him.**

L: The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.

P: **I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exulted.**

L: I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me,

P: **“You are my father, my God and the Rock of my salvation!”**

L: I will make him the first born, the highest of the rulers of the earth.

P: **Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm. I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure.**

L: “If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgressions with the rod and their iniquity with scourges;

P: **but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His line shall continue forever, and his throne endure before me like the sun. It shall be established forever like the moon, an enduring witness in the skies.”**

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

<sup>33</sup> Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

<sup>53</sup> When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. <sup>54</sup> When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, <sup>55</sup> and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup> And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Sermon (Laura H)

I read that some time ago government officials could not find the cornerstone for the United States Capitol building. You may remember that when a building is built out of stone there is one stone, the cornerstone, that is the basis of the foundation. All the other foundation stones line to it. It is the basis of the whole building.

It seems there was a great big dedication ceremony and laying of the cornerstone in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when construction began on the building. Some say that George Washington himself laid that corner stone. Perhaps, since the city that is Washington DC is built on a swamp, over the years it sunk. But the time came when it could not be located. They had a commission to dig to find it – they started looking where the plaque said it was. Sometimes the foundation is so deep you can't see the corner stone but there is a plaque farther up the wall to show where it should be. I'm not sure if they found it or if they are still looking.

The cornerstone represents the history and dedication of the building, it's a sign and a symbol of its purpose. It's important not to lose sight of the cornerstone because it helps us to know why we are here. It might be a parable on our reading from the letter to the Ephesians.

*“So then, you are no longer strangers & aliens, but you are citizens with the saints & also members of the household of God, build upon the foundation of the apostles & prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him, the whole structure is joined together & grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.” (Eph 2:19-22)*

Just imagine what those words meant to those who first heard them, the Christians at Ephesus – Gentiles, Gentiles who had no part in the promises of God to Israel. The big question was – how do gentiles get saved? If they are not included in the covenants that God made with the people of Israel. They were not people who had the Hebrew scriptures to tell them how to live, how to be God's people.

But there is a word of comfort in this letter – by an amazing act of God in Christ, the promises of God to Israel are brought even to the Gentiles, even to us. We were outsiders, not part of the family, but we were destined for adoption. We are brought close to God through Christ. Some of us have been Christians for a long time and we tend to forget. But it's good to remind ourselves...

We can only be part of God's family through adoption. Christians are made. We were far off until we were brought close by Jesus Christ. If you look in your own Bible, you might notice that the architectural language – the cornerstone part contains passive verbs. It doesn't say “you decided to join the church.” The writer says we were “built.” we were “joined together,” we were “built together spiritually” – our relationship with the new family, the Christian family is not something we do. It is something done to us: grace, the free gift of God.

Those of us who are older may be aware that their parents probably never worried if they would be Christian or not. it was a natural & normal thing. Families went to church. But not now. If we want the next generation to grow up to share our faith, we have to be very intentional about teaching them our faith.

I have lost track of how many hours of screen time we spend per day – but I know its a lot. We worship together approximately 1 hour each week – there is a lot of competition during the week – images of success, of the good life, of the goals humans choose, other gods, so to speak, that are in competition with the good news revealed in Jesus Christ. Now, the teaching of the church, its witness, its worship and its work are very important ways of instilling in all of us a counter to the ways of the world.

There are people out there who are nominal Christians – they believe in God & perhaps even in Jesus Christ, but they don't gather for worship, they don't practice spiritual disciplines like personal prayer & daily bible study. I'm not sure that they think about God very often nor does their faith impact their life choices. To be a Christian, in contrast, is to be someone who is intentionally attempting to follow the way of Christ; someone who is letting the story of Christ form & guide their life. And it helps to be taught!

When I went to Junior high, I walked into a class room that looked different from other class rooms: there were those nozzles sticking up out of the desks. One of the kids played with one of them & the teacher yelled “don't touch that! Do you want to blow up the school!?”

Then we had a safety lesson. In fact, we spent about a week on safely rules. We had lots of things we had to learn. How to pour liquid from one container to another. How to smell something. So many things to learn. So many ways to mess up – we could blow up the whole school, we could start a fire, we could cause someone to go blind with our carelessness. We had to be taught how to live & move in this new class room. There was a special way to do almost anything in that class.

Someone pointed to a chart on a wall & asked “what's that all about?” Teacher said, “you guys are not ready for that. I will teach that later.” We had to be intentionally introduced to all that went into being chemists. And so it is with being a Christian, we are called into the church, built into the church by the Spirit of God & then we must begin to learn how to follow Jesus.

The text from Ephesians reminds us that the church is an identifiable new family. It is bigger than that which we normally call a family, for it is made up of all the different people whom Jesus is calling to follow him. It's as if being a Christians means that we have been taken out of our human family & made a member of the family of God – called the household of faith in some translations.

We might imagine a house with Christ as its cornerstone upon which the whole house is built, that foundation upon which everything else rests. And we are built into that building resting on the cornerstone.

I hope you take comfort in this. So often, we hear people present the Christian faith as something we do or decide. I've done it myself, caught myself saying "when I gave my life to Christ." "When I asked Jesus to come into my heart..." As if it was all about me, my choices, myself

But the letter to the Ephesians stops me in my tracks. It speaks of us in the passive voice and God in the active voice. It is GOD who has called us here to worship. God has made a decision for us. God has built us into parts of this new household. God is breaking down the dividing walls between women and men, between the races, and social classes and generations. If you gather in worship today, if you long to worship and follow Jesus with others, it is because you have been put here by God.

I think it's a great comfort to be reminded that when all is said and done, my relationship with Christ is not just a matter of what I feel or do or say, but what God in Christ, through the church has done. We don't always feel, act or speak like a Christian, but that's not the point. The point is that we are called forth to be part of this strange, wonderful new divine experiment in human family called "church."

Have you sometimes come to worship feeling empty, not really believing anything for sure? Then through the music or the reading of Scripture, through the children's story, through prayer together as we worship, you begin to feel faith growing strong in you. Usually, we say a prayer of confession. You may not feel like confessing your sin. Fine. We will do it for you. We'll confess our own sin and the sin of the world. And perhaps you will sense our confession as your confession and you will join us in Christian honesty about sin. That is one way that being part of the church God works through our life together to help us grow in ways we would not do on our own.

Let us give thanks to God that we have been blessed to have been invited, called, built into, joined into this household, this temple, this body of Christ. We have not been left on our own, so far as our faith is concerned. We are part of the family, the family of God called “church.”

We who are the church together, ought to expect each other to share skills, insights we need to resist the world and its temptations to follow after false gods. Perhaps you have the prayer packet we sent out last summer. Have you looked through it lately? Perhaps you have a devotional booklet we sent out around Easter time – are you reading it? We can talk with each other about what we are learning in worship and in our own personal devotions. We can meet together in person or on line to study together what it means to follow Jesus.

Today’s epistle declares “you are no longer.... aliens,” no longer far off from God. But maybe you are also learning that by being close to God, you are becoming alienated from this society, that you find yourself at odds with some of this culture’s dominant values. You are now part of a new family, adopted into a new household with a different culture.

With Christ as our cornerstone, we are a new people, a visible “building” for all the world to see that Jesus is making possible a visible, viable alternative way to the way the world gathers people, a new people, the body of Christ. Thanks be to God!

Hymn: # 472 We are God’s People

#### Invitation to the Offering

God’s goodness flourishes around us in this season of growth and re-creation. Our gifts to God are a token of our gratitude for all we receive in Christ and in creation. These gifts will also help God’s goodness flourish through the ministries we undertake in Jesus’ name.

Anthem

#### Prayer of Dedication

God of goodness and growth, receive our gifts and our gratitude for the fruitfulness you provide. Bless our gifts with your Spirit so that they may accomplish more than we can ask or imagine, for the sake of Christ, our Friend and Saviour. Amen.

### Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Good and generous God, in Jesus Christ you came to us, promising life in abundance. We give you thanks today for the abundant gifts we receive in him— the assurance of your love, day by day; the relief of your mercy when we recognize our own failings; hope to sustain us when things seem bleak; and peace that comes when we trust ourselves to your eternal keeping. These are the gifts that matter, O God, so for all these gifts and other blessings we recognize around us, we give you thanks in these moments of silence: *(Keep silence for 15 seconds)*

Generous God, today we pray for all whose lives seem empty of joy— because the going is tough, and friends still seem far away... because their hearts are filled with disappointment... because their sorrow and grief are keen this day... *(Keep silence for 15 seconds)* Support each one in your abundant compassion.

Generous God, we remember before you those who lives are empty of peace and hope— because they are struggling with illness or disability... because they are powerless in the face of violence or other forces beyond their control... Especially today we pray for all those facing discrimination because of their culture or their religion, and those still struggling to overcome the effects of the pandemic... *(Keep silence for 15 seconds)* Send your peace and promise with signs of new possibility and real hope.

Generous God, we remember before you those for whom life is frustrating— because they are without work... because they have made poor choices and cannot find a way forward... because what comes next does not seem clear... *(Keep silence for 15 seconds)* Support each one in your abundant mercy and lead them in new paths.

Good and generous God, fill us with energy & compassion to reach out to those facing difficult times. May we become the gift we have received in Jesus, loving the world with mercy, reconciling with one another as he heals us that we may live together in peace, for it is in his name we pray. **Amen**

Hymn: # 585 Christ you call us all to service

### Charge and Benediction:

May God, the source of all perseverance and all encouragement, grant that we may agree with one another after the manner of Jesus Christ, and so with one mind and one voice may praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us. Amen.

## HYMNS

410 Joyful, joyful we adore you

1 Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, Lord of love. Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away; giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

2 All your works with joy surround you; earth and heaven reflect your rays; stars and angels sing around you, centre of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea, chanting bird and flowing fountain, join to praise you joyfully.

3 You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed, wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest. God Creator, Christ our Saviour, all are yours who live in love. Teach us how to love our neighbour; lift us to your joy above.

4 Morning stars, awake the chorus; mortals, join with every part, for what joy is set before us as Christ's love joins heart to heart! Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife; joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

655 Give me oil in my lamp

1 Give me oil in my lamp; keep me burning; give me oil in my lamp, I pray. Give me oil in my lamp; keep me burning; keep me burning till the break of day.

Refrain:

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna, sing hosanna to the Servant King; sing hosanna, sing hosanna, sing hosanna, let us sing!

2 Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising; give me joy in my heart, I pray. Give my joy in my heart, keep me praising; keep me praising till the break of day.

Refrain

3 Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving; give me peace in my heart, I pray. Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving; keep me loving till the break fo day.

Refrain

4 Give me love in my heart; keep me serving; give me love in my heart, I pray. Give me love in my heart; keep me serving; keep me serving till the break of day.

Refrain

472 We are God's people

1 We are God's people, the chosen of the Lord, born of the Spirit, established by the word; our corner stone is Christ alone, and strong in him we stand; Oh, let us live transparently, and walk heart to heart and hand in hand.

2 We are God's loved ones, the bride of Christ our Lord, for we have known it, the love of God outpoured; now let us learn how to return the gift of love once given; oh, let us share each joy and care and live with a zeal that pleases heaven.

3 We are the body of which the Lord is head, called to obey him, now risen from the dead; he wills us be a family, diverse yet truly one: oh, let us freely give our gifts, and so shall God's work on earth be done.

4 We are a temple, the Spirit's dwelling place, formed in great weakness, a cup to hold God's grace; alone we die for on its own each ember loses fire: yet, joined in one the flame burns on to give warmth and light and to inspire.

585 Christ you call us all to service

1 Christ, you call us all to service, call us all who follow you; plant in us a deep commitment all your work and will to do. Fire a passion for your justice; in us kindle love of peace; help us heal the broken hearted; to the captive bring release.

2 Teach us how to work together brother, sister, side by side, equal partners in the struggle, in the cause of truth allied. To each one some gift is given – man or woman, young or old; help us use each skill and talent, your great purpose to unfold.

3 Let us be a servant people, reconciling, ending strife, seeking ways more just of sharing and of ordering human life. Fill us with a glowing vision of this world as it should be; send us forth to change that vision into blest reality.