# The Approach

## Prelude

## Welcome and Announcements

**Good morning everyone, welcome to our Sunday worship service. I am leading the service today since Rev. John Zondag is chairing the Knox Church, Neepawa Annual Meeting as their Interim Moderator.**

**The announcements are in the bulletin. If you did not get a copy of the announcements by email, there are printed copies at the back of the church.**

**You may rise for the hymns where indicated or you may remain seated**

## Lighting of the Christ Candle

**I will now light the Christ Candle**

**Please join me in the Call to Worship, as shown on the display**

## Call to Worship (responsive):

**If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!  
Thanks be to God for such great mercy.**

**Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!  
Thanks be to God for new beginnings!**

**God has given us the ministry of reconciliation through Christ Jesus.  
Together we will make a new beginning in Christ!**

**Let us worship God with joyful hearts, trusting God to renew us and all things.  
We will lift our praises to God with hearts refreshed by grace.**

**Let us worship God**

**Let us now sing Hymn #17 *How blest are they whose trespass* (Psalm 32), the words are on the screen**

### How blest are they whose trespass (public domain)

1. **How blest are they whose trespass**

**has freely been forgiven,**

**whose sins are wholly covered**

**before the sight of heaven,**

**blest to whom the Lord God**

**does not impute their sin,**

**who have a guileless spirit,**

**whose heart is true within.**

1. **While I kept guilty silence**,

**my strength was spent with grief:**

**your hand was heavy on me,**

**my soul found no relief,**

**but when I owned my trespass**

**and did not hide my sin,**

**then you forgave my guilt, Lord,**

**restored my life within.**

1. **So let the godly seek you**

**in times when you are near;**

**no whelming floods shall reach them,**

**or cause their hearts to fear;**

**O Lord, you are my refuge,**

**you are my hiding place,**

**and you surround me always**

**with songs of saving grace.**

1. **'I graciously will teach you**

**the way that you should go,**

**and, with my eye upon you,**

**help you my counsel know.**

**Then do not be unruly**

**or slow to understand;**

**be not perverse, but willing**

**to heed my wise command.'**

1. **The sorrows of the wicked**

**increase from year to year,**

**but those who trust the Lord God**

**know love instead of fear.**

**Then in the Lord be joyful;**

**in song lift up your voice;**

**be glad in God, you righteous:**

**rejoice. O saints, rejoice!**

## Prayer of Approach and Confession

**Let us bow our heads together in prayer, followed by saying the Lord’s Prayer**

**God of Mystery and Mercy, we gather to worship you in humility and hope because we believe you have the power to change the world; to change the world for the better with your love.**

**We gather to worship you trusting that no one or situation is beyond your concern, or your embrace.**

**Such love astonishes us.**

**Without your grace we cannot imagine such love.**

**Inspire us with a vision of love which will change the world and our lives through the love and mercy we meet in Jesus Christ, your Son and our Saviour.**

**God of love and mercy, when we pause for a moment in your presence, the daily details of our lives press in on us.**

**We recall things left undone, opportunities ignored.**

**We remember careless words spoken, disappointments that trouble our souls.**

**In silence we offer to you our misspent moments and missed opportunities:**

*Silence for 20 seconds.*

**Join me now in the Lord’s Prayer**

## The Lord’s Prayer (KJV - “debts” and “debtors”)

**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, forever.**

**Amen.**

## Assurance of Forgiveness

**Remember the promise that the Apostle Paul declares:**

**What can separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship? Distress? Peril or sword?**

**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the God who loves us. Neither death nor life, things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.**

**Thanks be to God for such a promise!**

**The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.**

**Please join me in singing Hymn #39 *God of mercy, God of grace;* the words are on the screen**

### God of mercy, God of grace (public domain)

1. **God of mercy, God of grace,**

**show the brightness of your face.**

**Shine upon us, Saviour, shine;**

**fill your world with light divine,**

**and your saving health extend**

**unto earth's remotest end.**

1. **Let the people praise you, Lord;**

**be by all that live adored.**

**Let the nations shout and sing**

**glory to their gracious King;**

**at your feet their tribute pay,**

**and your holy will obey.**

1. **Let the people praise you, Lord;**

**earth shall then its fruits afford.**

**Unto us your blessing give;**

**we to you devoted live,**

**all below and all above,**

**one in joy and light and love.**

# The Word Proclaimed

## Prayer for Illumination (sung): (#404, v. 2)

**Come, Holy Spirit, for, in you,**

**your prophets wrote and spoke.**

**Unlock the truth, yourself the key;**

**unseal the sacred book.**

## Scripture Readings:

### Joshua 5:9-12;

**9The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have removed from you the disgrace of being slaves in Egypt.” That is why the place was named Gilgal, the name it still has.**

**10While the Israelites were camping at Gilgal on the plain near Jericho, they observed Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month. 11The next day was the first time they ate food grown in Canaan: roasted grain and bread made without yeast. 12The manna stopped falling then, and the Israelites no longer had any. From that time on they ate food grown in Canaan.**

### Psalm 32

**1Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,  
    whose wrongs are pardoned.  
2Happy is the one whom the Lord does not accuse of doing wrong  
    and who is free from all deceit.**

**3When I did not confess my sins,  
    I was worn out from crying all day long.**  
**4Day and night you punished me, Lord;  
    my strength was completely drained,  
    as moisture is dried up by the summer heat.**

**5Then I confessed my sins to you;  
    I did not conceal my wrongdoings.  
I decided to confess them to you,  
    and you forgave all my sins.**

**6So all your loyal people should pray to you in times of need;[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+32&version=GNT" \l "fen-GNT-15603b" \o "See footnote b)]  
    when a great flood of trouble comes rushing in,  
    it will not reach them.**

**7You are my hiding place;  
    you will save me from trouble.**  
**I sing aloud of your salvation,  
    because you protect me.**

**8The Lord says, “I will teach you the way you should go;  
    I will instruct you and advise you.**

**9Don't be stupid like a horse or a mule,  
    which must be controlled with a bit and bridle  
    to make it submit.”**

**10The wicked will have to suffer,  
    but those who trust in the Lord  
    are protected by his constant love.**

**11You that are righteous, be glad and rejoice  
    because of what the Lord has done.  
 You that obey him, shout for joy!**

**Glory to the Father,**

**and to the Son,**

**and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning,**

**is now,**

**and will be for ever! Amen**

### 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

**16No longer, then, do we judge anyone by human standards. Even if at one time we judged Christ according to human standards, we no longer do so. 17Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. 18All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. 19Our message is that God was making all human beings his friends through Christ.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3A16-21&version=GNT" \l "fen-GNT-31926a" \o "See footnote a)] God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends.**

**20Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! 21Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.**

### Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32.

**1One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, 2the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started grumbling, “This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them!” 3So Jesus told them this parable:**

**11b“There was once a man who had two sons. 12The younger one said to him, ‘Father, give me my share of the property now.’ So the man divided his property between his two sons. 13After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. 14He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that country, and he was left without a thing. 15So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. 16He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. 17At last he came to his senses and said, ‘All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! 18I will get up and go to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you. 19I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers.”’ 20So he got up and started back to his father.**

**“He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. 21‘Father,’ the son said, ‘I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.’ 22But the father called to his servants. ‘Hurry!’ he said. ‘Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. 23Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! 24For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’ And so the feasting began.**

**25“In the meantime the older son was out in the field. On his way back, when he came close to the house, he heard the music and dancing. 26So he called one of the servants and asked him, ‘What's going on?’ 27‘Your brother has come back home,’ the servant answered, ‘and your father has killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.’ 28The older brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. 29But he spoke back to his father, ‘Look, all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends! 30But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home, you kill the prize calf for him!’ 31‘My son,’ the father answered, ‘you are always here with me, and everything I have is yours. 32But we had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.’”**

**Let us now sing Hymn #706 *Come, let us sing*; the words are on the screen**

### Come, let us sing (public domain)

1. **Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,**

**tender and true, tender and true;**

**out of the heart of the Father above,**

**streaming to me and to you:**

**wonderful love, wonderful love**

**dwells in the heart of the Father above.**

1. **Jesus the Saviour this gospel to tell**

**joyfully came, joyfully came,**

**came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,**

**sharing their sorrow and shame:**

**seeking the lost, seeking the lost,**

**saving, redeeming at measureless cost.**

1. **Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;**

**why do they roam? why do they roam?**

**Love only waits to forgive and forget;**

**home, weary wanderers, home:**

**wonderful love, wonderful love**

**dwells in the heart of the Father above.**

1. **Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love;**

**come and abide, come and abide,**

**lifting my life till it rises above**

**envy and falsehood and pride:**

**seeking to be, seeking to be**

**lowly and humble, a learner of thee.**

## Sermon: Forgiveness

### Prayer

**Soften our hearts, O God, as we listen to the words of scripture, so that our hearts may be fertile soil in which you plant your living Word. Amen.**

### Sermon text

**St. Jerome, in his *Commentary on Galatians* told this story about John the Evangelist:**

**The blessed John the Evangelist lived in Ephesus until extreme old age. His disciples could barely carry him to church and he could not muster the voice to speak many words. During individual gatherings he usually said nothing but, "Little children, love one another." The disciples and brothers in attendance, annoyed because they always heard the same words, finally said, "Teacher, why do you always say this?" He replied with a line worthy of John: "Because it is the Lord's commandment and if it alone is kept, it is sufficient."**

**During lent we have the opportunity to reflect upon our lives and the world we live in. Today, let’s reflect on the theme of forgiveness.**

**One of the best passages on the theme of forgiveness is in today’s Gospel reading where Jesus tells the Parable of the Prodigal or Lost Son. In this parable, Jesus tells the story of three people:**

1. **There is the father, who divides his property between his two sons who have become adults, perhaps as a way to prepare for his eventual death. We’d call this succession planning today.**
2. **There is the younger son who takes his inheritance, leaves home, and wastes his money on proverbial wine, women and song until he has nothing left.**
3. **There is the eldest son, who stays home and runs the family farm, still under his father’s direction.**

**When the second son’s luck ran out he decided to go home, if only to be a servant to his father and brother. His father welcomed him home with a party.**

**The older brother, the responsible one, was upset and questioned his father’s reaction to the return of the prodigal son. The father explained that he feared that his second son was dead, but had returned alive. And the story ends there.**

**The story of the prodigal, or lost, son is ultimately one of forgiveness. Nowhere does the father say that he either approves or disapproves of his second son’s behaviour. He simply forgives him.**

**The theme of forgiveness is also in our readings from the Psalms and Paul’s second letter to Corinthians.**

**Psalm 32 declares how good it is to have God’s forgiveness and how the writer of the Psalm struggled with confessing his sins.**

**In the reading from 2nd Corinthians, Paul reminds the church in Corinth that they must now judge people by God’s standards, not human ones. This is quite a demand, since we cannot really know exactly how God thinks. However, if we were to try to look at people as God might see them, I think that we would be more forgiving.**

**So what of today?**

**We live in interesting times, to say the least. We are seeing the end of one set of troubles, the pandemic that has been on our land for past two years, and the beginning of new sets of troubles: with inflation, war, and possible worldwide food shortages.**

**Coming out of the pandemic, we are left with widespread anger and fear. They are both connected.**

**There is anger among all sorts of people. Some are angry at the authorities for what they did or did not do.**

**There is anger at the restrictions. There is anger at how the issue of vaccination and treatment was handled. In some cases there is just a lot of anger without a target; I saw that in the Trucker’s Convoy among many of the protestors and counter-protestors.**

**Then there is fear: fear of crowds, fear of the unvaccinated or just fear in general. Whether or not some of this fear has been deliberately generated is open to question but there is no doubt that it is there and that it feeds the anger. Fear is also one reason why there are only few people here today.**

**I can’t say anything that will calm your fears other than you should pray to God about them. Some fears are reasonable and others are not.**

**Anger has a similar solution, first pray for those you angry with and be prepared to forgive them. This especially applies to people in our own Church. We should pray for those who are not here today. If they have done or said something that hurt you, be prepared to forgive them.**

**It’s simple, but it’s not easy.**

**Often we cannot forgive someone until we have seen some repentance on their part. In this we make the mistake of judging people by human standards or assuming that we have to be in the right. We should aspire to see people as God sees them. One way to do this is to pray for them; we probably won’t change them, but we almost certainly change how we see them.**

**Spiritually, unreasonable fear, anger and outright hatred are bricks in the wall between us and God. Every time you remove those from your hearts, you make it easier to approach Him.**

**Forgiveness also has real practical benefits. In a congregation such as ours, if we allow ourselves to carry resentments acquired during the pandemic, we will drive people away. As it is, you can see that we have many empty pews here.**

**Like I said before, this issue of forgiveness is simple but not easy. Looking at the wider issues in our society, it’s hard not to be angry at those whose foolish decisions and incompetence has led to so many troubles and damaged or ended the lives of so many people.**

**However, we should remember that in being willing to forgive, we do not endorse their actions. We do not say that they have done no harm nor do we say that justice should not be done. What we do when we forgive is remove the anger from our own hearts so that we can become closer to God.**

**In this time of troubles, we need to learn to forgive one another. Thank you.**

# The Response

**Please join me in the Lenten Response, as shown on the screen.**

## Lenten Response, Fourth Sunday in Lent (on the screen)

**One: During Lent, we remember that even when we disobey and turn away, we are still loved by God.**

**All: God does not give up on us.**

**One: God breaks our stubbornness and calls us back from our wandering, so we can experience the joy and peace that comes from following Christ.**

**All: May we have the courage to hear, to change and to align ourselves with Christ.**

**One: Let us pray.**

**All: Persistent God,**

**help us to listen for your voice.**

**Let us hear what you are saying to us and make us willing to change our ways.**

**Break our resistance, forgive our sins**

**and call us back to you.**

**In the name of Jesus Christ, our prophet, priest and king, we pray. Amen.**

**Let’s now sing Hymn #371 *Love divine, all loves excelling*; the words are on the screen**

### Love divine, all loves excelling (public domain)

1. **Love divine, all loves excelling,**

**joy of heaven, to earth come down;**

**fix in us thy humble dwelling,**

**all thy faithful mercies crown.**

**Jesus, thou art all compassion,**

**pure, unbounded love thou art;**

**visit us with thy salvation,**

**enter every trembling heart.**

1. **Breathe, oh breathe thy loving Spirit**

**into every troubled breast!**

**Let us all in thee inherit,**

**let us find the promised rest;**

**take away our love of sinning;**

**Alpha and Omega be;**

**end of faith as its beginning,**

**set our hearts at liberty.**

1. **Come, almighty to deliver,**

**let us all thy grace receive;**

**suddenly return and never,**

**never more thy temples leave.**

**Thee we would be always blessing,**

**serve thee as thy hosts above,**

**pray and praise thee, without ceasing,**

**glory in thy perfect love.**

1. **Finish then thy new creation;**

**pure and spotless let us be;**

**let us see thy great salvation**

**perfectly re stored in thee,**

**changed from glory into glory**

**till in heaven we take our place,**

**till we cast our crowns before thee,**

**lost in wonder, love and praise.**

## Prayers of the People

**Please join me in prayer**

**Heavenly father, Gracious God, you have called us together as your people, to be the church of Jesus Christ.**

**Make us one in faith and discipleship, breaking bread together, and telling the good news, so that the world may believe you are love, turn to your ways, and live in the light of your truth.**

**Faithful God,   
Embrace us with your hope.**

**Creator God, you made all things and called them good.**

**We pray for the earth in its vulnerability, depleted by our lifestyle choices and our economic expectations.**

**Inspire reverence for the earth in all people.**

**Guide us all to make wiser choices for the sake of your creation.**

**Help us use resources wisely, with future generations in mind, guarding the fragile balances you have set between many precious species.**

**Faithful God,  
Embrace us with your hope.**

**Jesus Christ, Prince of peace, you taught us of God’s reconciling grace in the story of a father who welcomed back his wandering son and invited his jealous son to open his heart.**

**Speak to the hearts of all your people in this time when so many neighbours and nations sit in judgment on each other, provoking conflict and resentment.**

**Lead us back to treating one another with respect and civility in our public discourse.**

**Call those in positions of power and influence to work for the common good.**

**Turn us away from anger, fear, violence or vanity, which can turn neighbour against neighbour and nation against nation.**

**May all who claim your name be known as makers of the peace.**

**Teach us how to seek peace on earth together.**

**Today, we pray especially for the people caught up in the conflict in Ukraine, show them the way to a just peace.**

**Faithful God,  
Embrace us with your hope.**

**O Christ, healer of hearts and hopes, you desire health and wholeness for each one of us:**

**As we come out of the pandemic, with all its restrictions and conflict, teach us to forgive one another as we come to terms with what has happened.**

**Many resent what has happened and the measures taken to control the spread of the disease, teach us to put these feelings of anger and loss behind us.**

**We pray that those who have lost their livelihoods in this pandemic may find true abundance.**

**Grant rest and renewal to those who are broken in body, mind or spirit, and bring comfort and hope to all who face loss and loneliness.**

**In silence we lift before you the names of those on our hearts today:**

*Silence for 30 seconds*

**Faithful God,  
Embrace us with your hope.**

**Amen**

## Offering

**Since we aren’t passing the plate around, please join me in prayer while the offering plate is brought forward.**

## Offering Prayer

**We place these gifts into your hands, O God. Bless them with your transforming grace so that they may become seeds springing up with new life in the world you love.**

**Fill our hearts with that same grace so we can bring hope to weary and worried lives in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

**Please join me in singing the Doxology; the words are on the screen**

## Doxology: (#661, v. 1)

**We give thee but thine own,**

**whate’er the gift may be.**

**All that we have is thine alone,**

**a trust, o Lord, from thee.**

## Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

**We place these gifts into your hands, O God. Bless them with your transforming grace so that they may become seeds springing up with new life in the world you love.**

**Fill our hearts with that same grace so we can bring hope to weary and worried lives in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

**Amen.**

# Sent out to Serve

**Let us now sing Hymn #674 *In the bulb there is a flower*; the words are on the screen**

### In the bulb there is a flower (Words by Natalie Sleeth, *(1930-1992) © Hope Publishing Company*)

1. **In the bulb, there is a flower,**

**in the seed an apple tree,**

**in cocoons, a hidden promise:**

**butterflies will soon be free!**

**In the cold and snow of winter**

**there’s a spring that waits to be,**

**unrevealed until it’s season,**

**something God alone can see.**

1. **There’s a song in every silence,**

**seeking word and melody;**

**there’s a dawn in every darkness,**

**bringing hope to you and me.**

**From the past will come the future;**

**what it holds, a mystery,**

**unrevealed until it’s season,**

**something God alone can see.**

1. **In the end is our beginning,**

**in our time, infinity;**

**in our doubt there is believing,**

**in our life, eternity,**

**in our death, a resurrection,**

**at the last, a victory,**

**unrevealed until it’s season,**

**something God alone can**

## Commissioning and Blessing

**Go now in peace, go and bring peace to those in your life. Be quick to admit your own faults and gracefully forgive the faults in others. Be kind to one another.**

**God bless you all**

## Choral Amen #780

## Postlude