

Welcome to Worship

Regions East - United Church of Canada

Sunday Worship - Service 1

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TERRITORY

CALL TO WORSHIP:

At the very beginning of our earth, the waters of chaos covered the everything;

God brings order where there is chaos.

God created the land and breathed life into the land. Then God created humans to be helpers;

God brings order where there is chaos.

Then time passed until the time of Noah. God flooded the earth, then gave the promise never do it again;

God brings order where there is chaos.

Jesus walked into the rushing waters of the Jordan, an act of faith that brought the fullness of the human experience.

God brings order where there is chaos.

In difficult times, we remember God's presence and unite to bring healing to all the world

And we answer God's call to work to bring order from chaos.

* **HYMN:** Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

PRAYER OF APPROACH:

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

God, our tears flow at the changes we see around us, and within us. We feel scared. We feel powerless. We look around... where can we find hope?

We pray for mindful acceptance when we hear of the latest crisis, not the placid acceptance that leads to complacency, but acceptance that motivates and empowers us to respond with clarity, competence, and faithfulness.

Refresh our bodies, our minds, and our spirits so we can return to the world and drench it with compassion, love and hope.
Amen.

HYMN: MV 87 - Water Flowing

THEME CONVERSATION:

Rev Heather Sandford

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

As we honour the water which we can't live without, we remember and honour all those who stand for the good of creation... and we offer prayer for them and for ourselves...

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy One, we need to ask for your forgiveness.

It seems like we are, all too often, part of the problem. We are complicit... sometimes actively and sometimes passively, with systems of profit and destruction, systems that break down rather than build up and have wreaked havoc on your most vulnerable people and places.

When we allow ourselves to realize the harm we are a part of, the damage we have participated in, we are overwhelmed. We share these feelings with you now... (pause).

We are sorry for the part that we have played and for the times when we have not acted when we should have. We want to do better. Help us to be better. Redeem us... change us into hope bearers, light sharers, and caregivers.

You promise us love... we promise to love you and this world in return. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God's love is new every morning and flows to us like a river. Know that you are drenched in God's love this day and every day. Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

However we approach the Bible, it confirms our identity as Christians and provides us with stories and literature through which God continues to speak. It is through scripture that we frequently hear the Word of God, naming, calling, challenging, and redeeming us. The Spirit of God uses this literature and metaphors to speak to our spirits, inviting us into wholeness, renewal, and new life. So now let us listen to ancient words, so the living Word of God might be heard among us afresh.

FIRST TESTAMENT READING: Old Testament: Genesis 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19 'Noah builds a boat'

RESPONSIVE PSALM: Psalm 104:27-33
'God's sustenance of Earth'

EPISTLE READING: Revelation 22:1-5
'God's healing for Earth'

ANTHEM: Janet Kidd is recording to fill this spot

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 28:1-10
'God's celebration with Earth'

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Living God, eternal Spirit,
let your bright intoxicating energy
which fired those first disciples
fall on us
to turn the world again. Amen

REFLECTION: Cruisin'...

Who remembers Paul Harvey?
I'll be honest and admit I actually had to look up the name...I could not remember his name!
I could remember his tag line though...
And now you know the rest of the story!
Yup. It was a pretty ubiquitous thing from what I can recall. It was on one radio station or another. Driving here or there and the next thing you know, there he was, filling in all the details until we all knew the rest of the story.
I wonder what Paul Harvey would write about the times we are living through today.
Of course, we have no idea what the rest of this story is going to be!
It could be a short story or a long story.
A novella or a full length, super duper, novel exceeding 1000 pages. Because, lets be honest here, we are very far from the end of the story we are current writing.
Which is why I picked the story of Noah for the basis of my reflection.
It all started a couple of weeks ago, when a friend - and colleague - who was having one of THOSE days... don't we all have them... sent me a message linking our current pandemic mind frame to the story of Noah.
I will admit to being... intrigued.
So I picked up my Revised Common Lectionary and looked at what parts of the story we read in our three year cycle... and it came to me... we don't know the rest of the story.
Yes, we know that God paid a visit to Noah as he was sipping his tea after a long day at the office. And we know that God told Noah to

drop everything and build a boat. "The world is about to change and I need you" God declared "and you and your family and a bunch of smelly animals are going on a cruise". Noah - always faithful - said okay. And then set about building a boat. And collecting a fair number of animals to fill it.

But then we skip a whole bunch of the story to get to

The waters rose over the earth for one hundred fifty days.

Wow... 150 days. That's a lot of days...and a lot of the story that got left out... the seven days here and week there... you see, we tend to think about the 40 days and nights...after all, the number forty is important in the bible. Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and Moses and company wandered the desert for 40 years but all those other numbers kind of get lost, at least for me.

But 40 days isn't the rest of the story... because when we use the lectionary, we skip another bunch of stuff to where the earth was dry and everybody left the boat and... well, for sake of brevity... didn't live happily ever after.

But that isn't the whole rest of the story. Because a lot of time passed between the 150 days and that dry land...

Because the way I read the story... it took another 150 days for the water to recede again, depositing Noah, the boat, the family, the birds, the creepy crawlies and the animals at the top of Ararat mountains...

Now the Ararat Mountains are high.

5 thousand one hundred and 27 metres... that's 16,854 feet.

That is a lot of water still messing up the place.

It's gonna take some time for all ... that... water ... to evaporate... It does!

It takes an exceedingly long time.

According to the story, the water decreased gradually until the 10th month... yes, you heard me correctly.

Until the 10th month... and then... see... there is a lot more to the rest of the story... 'cause after 40 days... Noah sent out a raven. Then Noah sent out a dove but the dove came back because there was no place to land. And it was only after Noah sent out a dove that didn't come back that he knew... okay.

It's safe to stop cruisin' around and set foot on terra firma again...

So, what's the point?

As of June 18th, COVID 19 has infected 8,478,580 people. Of them, 452,231 have died.

Some 4 million people are still sick while some 4 million have recovered.

So, what's the point?

Well, we're not in all that different a situation than poor old Noah was. We may not be on a boat with no land in sight, but the lives we were living, well, they certainly have been changed.

There is no doubt about it...the earth has shifted beneath our feet.

And boy, that first 40 days.

They were hard.

And we wanted it over and we wanted everything to go back that way it was and some people claimed it was God's judgement and some people claimed it was Satan and some people said God will have us back to normal any day now ...

... and if it is one thing that the ancient story of Noah teaches us, its that we need to be patient.

That it will take time.

If we watch, we will see the signs that the danger is passing.

The rain will stop falling. But that isn't the rest of the story.

We will still wait and we will still watch and eventually we will find our selves on a mountaintop.

Watching the waters recede from the safety of our boat, whatever it may be.

And we will again be patient.

Watching for signs and sending out ravens and doves and waiting to see if they come back again.

Until the day comes when we can step off of the life raft that has kept us safe and find a firm footing again.

And during all of the waiting and all of the watching, we can know that, like Noah and his boat load of refugees, God is with us.

That we are not alone in this.

God is with us.

Thanks be to God.

And that is the rest of the story.

Amen

A NEW CREED

HYMN: Grateful MV 182

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

OFFERING OUR GIFTS TO GOD:

We are called not to try to preserve the moment of God's intervention in our world, but to learn from it. Let us respond to God's ever-changing and ever-challenging presence with our gifts that make ministry possible.

DEDICATION:

During this time, there are many ways to give to your local Community of Faith... most accept e-transfer or you can mail cheques or drop cheques or cash at your local church. Canada Helps is also forwarding donations to local Communities of Faith.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

Great and Holy One,
as we sojourn through your world,
may we be ever mindful of leaving a light footprint,
to give generously,
and to care for one another.
Multiply our gifts and our works,
that they may amplify your beauty and grace.
Amen.

PRAYING FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Creating God,
in this world made silent by disease and fear,
may our words leave enough silence for your voice to be heard:
a space broad enough to hold prayers for all the world,

and a place deep enough for us all to gather in your love. (pause)

We place a silence here for conflict large and small,
where only peace and time and love can heal,
(a moment of silence)

We place a silence here for all who hurt,
hurt so deep that no words can ever repair,
where only peace and time and love can heal,
(a moment of silence)

We place a silence here for all the injustice in our world,
for actions that marginalize and discount,
where only peace and time and love can heal,
(a moment of silence)

We place a silence here for all victims and survivors,
who can never hear the 'I'm sorry' as they struggle for wholeness,
where only peace and time and love can heal,
(a moment of silence)

We place a silence here for everyone touched by COVID 19,
whose days are confusing and confused,
where only peace and time and love can heal,
(a moment of silence)

Creating God,
in this world made silent by disease and fear,
may our words leave enough silence for your voice to be heard:
a space broad enough to hold prayers for all the world,
and a place deep enough for us all to gather in your love. (pause)

We gather these and all the prayers as we pray together the
prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray... Our Father..

Amen

WE ARE SENT FORTH

* **HYMN:** MV 163 - River Running in You And Me

* **COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION:**

Live *God's* joy,

letting yourselves be led into a whole and complete life.

Listen to your heart, filled with love for *God* and creation, bursting with song.

Notice the smallness of the hummingbirds and the vastness of the sky,

hear the sound of the water as it moves to the ocean and the lull of waves as they beat against the shore...

Great and lasting evidence of God's wonder.

Amen

* **CHORAL BENEDICTION:**

POSTLUDE