



...so much information...

Hey everyone – though it's disappointing not to be able to see you face to face, it's good to be with through the technology of waves and wires. I hope the weekend holds opportunity to do some things that bring you life – especially as we continue to navigate the challenges of pandemic living. Laurie and I have taken a few days off to spend time with our kids and are enjoying the time away. Some of you have been wondering what will be happening with church as we move into Phase 3 of Saskatchewan's reopening plan. The Elders will be discussing this in the coming days and on Wednesday we as a staff at Emmanuel will be meeting to begin working to develop a plan for reopening, whenever that may happen. I will keep you updated as to where things are with this.

As you may be aware, June is National Indigenous History Month. It is a month to honour the history, heritage and diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada. As a way to begin thinking about this, Kari has put together a guide to help us learn about and celebrate Indigenous people and their culture. There is a link to download the guide right below the link for this liturgy. We'll be talking more about this as we move through the month.

Over the past weeks, we have been highlighting our church's ministry partners. We've asked each of them to send us an update, including ways that we can best support them at this time. Today we are highlighting Leader Impact and the link to access Arlene's update is just below the link for this liturgy. If you would like to hear it now, just pause this, click the link and you can have a listen.

This last week and a half I have been trying to process the tragic death of George Floyd – I think we all have. Rightly so, it has reignited outrage and protest over police brutality, but it obviously goes deeper than that. It raises issues around racism, privilege, power structures, human rights, advocacy, justice, and value.

These are important issues and we need to find ways to respond. Next week we will begin a teaching series that will have us wrestle with how we represent Jesus's vision of peace and love and justice in the context of these issues and work to find ways to affect change.

But today I want to do something a little different with our liturgy.

I don't know how it has been for you, but for me I have begun to feel maxed out by all of the information. Social media and news outlets have inundated us with facts, stories, editorials, and images. There have been opportunities to join protests, vigils, and demonstrations. So many of my conversations have been dominated by all of this. It's starting to feel overwhelming – trying to keep up, but also trying to find a way to respond.

Then I was reminded of how there were times that Jesus withdrew from the crowds, the noise, the business, the fray, the demands to be alone. Not in a disengaged escapist kind of way, but with purpose – to rest, and connect with his Father. To pray, and think, and be refreshed and ground himself in resolve all with the intention of reengaging his work of bringing justice and peace through loving people and standing up against the Empire.

So the liturgy today is designed to be that kind of retreat for us – a kind of withdrawing to pray, and think, and be refreshed. It is rooted in Psalm 23 and is accompanied by reflections of Joan Chittister and prayers of Douglas McKelvey. (Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister. She is an author and advocate for justice, peace, and equality. Douglas McKelvey is an author and lyricist. One of the books he has written is entitled *Every Moment Holy* which is a collection of liturgies and prayers for the ordinary events of daily life.)

May God use it to refresh the tiredness of our souls and to energize our imaginations in how we can be the hands and feet of Jesus.

So here we go...

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He refreshes my soul.

He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honour to his name.

Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.

You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honour me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
Forever.

Psalm 23

Abide With Me

Abide with me fast falls the eventide
the darkness deepens Lord with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
help of the helpless abide with me

I need Thy presence every passing hour
what but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be
through cloud and sunshine abide with me

Henry Francis Lyte
Justin Smith

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need...

Psalm 23:1

We drive ourselves relentlessly from one exhaustion to another. We pace our societies by the pace of our computers. We conduct the major relationships of our lives—both professional and personal—according to the speed of our communications. Everyday we become more exhausted, less rested in body, spirit and mind, and so less capable of producing things, let alone of developing relationships. That's not irony, that's tragedy. And though we know it, we do not know what to do about it.

We need our souls to be refreshed. We need time to process what we already know so that we can put it together differently.

Joan Chittister

In a world so wired and interconnected,
our anxious hearts are pummeled by
an endless barrage of troubling news.
We are daily aware of more grief, O Lord,
than we can rightly consider,
of more suffering and scandal
than we can respond to,
of more hostility, hatred, horror, and injustice
than we can engage with compassion.

But you, O Jesus, are not disquieted
by such news of cruelty and terror and war.
You are neither anxious nor overwhelmed.
You carried the full weight of the suffering
of a broken world when you hung upon
the cross, and you carry it still.

Douglas McKelvey

He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He refreshes my soul.

Psalm 23:2

Noise, the holy one teaches, is what separates us from ourselves. We have become the culture of cacophony. Twenty-four hours a day our world crackles with information, idle talk, and senseless complaint. It's these words that do our thinking for us. Twenty-four hours a day this kind of noise substitutes for what might have become our own insights. When our souls are filled with noise, contemplation itself suffers. The noise of nothingness, the rattle and clamour of useless agendas, entombs us in ourselves. Then, contemplation itself is endangered. Distraction and ambition, anger and jealousy, pride and pain, fatigue and overload—all these distort the sense of the presence of God for us.

If we are to know God at all, only the silence of our own souls will do—the personal connection between God and ourselves—taking the time to listen to what the Word of the universe might be trying to say to us.

Joan Chittister

When the cacophony
of universal distress unsettles us,
remind us that we are but small
and finite creatures,
never designed to carry the vast abstractions
of great burdens,
for our arms are too short
and our strength is too small.
Justice and mercy,
healing and redemption,
are your great labours.

And yes, it is your good pleasure
to accomplish such works through your people,
but you have never asked any one of us
to undertake more than your grace
will enable us to fulfill.

Douglas McKelvey

Build My Life

Worthy of ev'ry song we could ever sing
worthy of all the praise we could ever bring
Worthy of ev'ry breath we could ever breathe
we live for You, we live for You

Jesus the name above ev'ry other name
Jesus the only one who could ever save
Worthy of ev'ry breath we could ever breathe
we live for You, we live for You

Holy there is no one like You
there is none beside You
Open up our eyes in wonder
and show us who You are
And fill us with Your heart
and lead us in Your love to those around me

Worthy of ev'ry song we could ever sing
worthy of all the praise we could ever bring
Worthy of ev'ry breath we could ever breathe
we live for You, we live for You

Holy there is no one like You
there is none beside You
Open up our eyes in wonder
and show us who You are
And fill us with Your heart
and lead us in Your love to those around me

I will build my life upon Your love
it is a firm foundation
I will put my trust in You alone
and I will not be shaken

Jesus the name above ev'ry other name
Jesus the only one who could ever save
Worthy of ev'ry breath we could ever breathe
we live for You, we live for You

Brett Younker
Karl Martin
Kirby Kaple
Matt Redman
Pat Barrett

He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honour to his name.

To pray does not mean that we will cease to be ourselves. It simply means that we will come to know clearly what it will take to become more of the Jesus figure we are all meant to be.

Prayer confronts us with ourselves and measures the distance between who and what we are and who and what Jesus is.

Jesus jeopardized his social approval, risked his very life by speaking out in public against the oppression of people in both synagogue and state. And he calls us to do the same.

Being immersed in prayer, really immersed in prayer, sears our souls. It forces us to see how far from our own ideals we stand. It challenges the images of goodness and piety and integrity we project. It confronts us with what it really means to live a good life. It requires courage of us rather than simply piety.

It says again and again, "Come, follow me."

Peace will come when we stretch our minds to listen to the noise within us that needs quieting and the wisdom from outside ourselves that needs to be learned. Then we will have something of value to leave the children besides hate, besides war, besides turmoil. Then peace will come.

Joan Chittister

There is so much lost in this world, O Lord,
so much that aches and groans and shivers
for want of redemption,
so much that seems dislocated, upended, desecrated,
unhinged—even in our own hearts.

Even in our own hearts
we bear the mark of all that is broken.
What is best in this world has been bashed
and battered and trodden down.
What was meant to be the substance has
become the brittle shell,
haunted by the ghosts of a glory so long crumbled
that only its rubble is remembered now.

Is it any wonder we should weep sometimes,
without knowing why?
It might be anything.
And then again, it might be everything.

We weep, O Lord, for those things that,
 though nameless, are still lost.
We weep for the cost of our rebellions,
 for the mocking and hollowing of holy things,
 for the inward curve of our souls,
 for the evidences of death outworked in
 every field and tree and blade of grass,
crept up in every creature, alert in every longing,
 infecting all fabrics of life.

We weep for the wretched expressions of all things
 that were first built of goodness and glory
 but are now their own shadow twins.
We have wept so often.
 And we will weep again.

Douglas McKelvey

Even when I walk
 through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
 protect and comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Human beings need spiritual rest as well as physical rest. We daily navigate the effects of stress and pressure, of frenzied work and frantic schedules. We are the weary and the worried, the angry and the anxious, and all of us saying the same thing: I need time for myself. I need to be able to think for a while. I just need someplace quiet. We find ourselves struggling between having no job, losing a job, trying to find a job, and being smothered by the job we have. Our bills pile up and our energy goes down just trying to meet them.

It is precisely then, when life is at its most frantic, most frightening, that we each need a place to go to, a place that wraps us around in silence and calm. No matter who we are or what we do, we need someplace we have put aside, a small, simple place we have designated as our doorway to peace, where we can sink into ourselves and find the God who awaits us there.

Joan Chittister

Somewhere in our tears
a hope is still kept.

We feel it in this darkness, like a tiny flame,
when we are told,

Jesus also wept.

You wept.

So moved by the pain of this crushed creation,
you, O Lord, heaved with the grief of it,
drinking the anguish like water
and sweating it out of your skin like blood.

Is it possible that you,
in your sadness over Lazarus,
in your grieving for Jerusalem,
in your sorrow in the garden,
have sanctified our weeping too?
For the grief of God is no small thing,
and the weeping of God is not without effect.
The tears of Jesus preceded
a resurrection of the dead.

O Spirit of God, is it then possible
that our tears might also be a kind of intercession?

That we, your children, in our groaning
with the sadness of creation,
could be joining in some burdened work
of coming restoration?

That we weep at that which breaks your heart,
because it has also broken ours—
sometimes so deeply that we cannot explain our weeping,
even to ourselves?

If that is true,
then let such weeping be received, O Lord,
as an intercession newly forged of holy sorrow.

Douglas McKelvey

Holy Spirit

There's nothing worth more that will ever come close
no thing can compare You're our living hope
Your Presence, Lord

We've tasted and seen the sweetest of loves
where our hearts becomes free and our shame is undone
In Your Presence Lord

Holy Spirit You are welcome here
flood this place and undo our doubt and fear
Your glory God is what our hearts long for
to be overcome by Your Presence Lord

Bryan Torwalt
Katie Torwalt

You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honour me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.

Psalm 23:4

Discrimination against the Indigenous, and people of colour and women and gays and Muslims, just because it is the tenor of the time, is to our eternal shame. It is the very kind of rejection that Jesus experienced. He was a Galilean. And he had the boldness to speak up for Canaanites and lepers and women and Samaritans and the poor and the stranger in the land. He refused to bow to the social pressure that comes with being "other."

And Jesus left to all of us the obligation to speak up on issues that threaten to erode our humanity. To speak out for the innocent and oppressed. To speak on, however long it takes and through whatever the pressures we face. To speak up when we hear the strategies of those who would balance the national budget by denying the hungry food, and children good education, and the unemployed and underpaid decent lives, and the new comers or marginalized of the land a way to become community.

Our obligation is not to be like those who would secure themselves by making others insecure. Our obligation is to be like Jesus.

Joan Chittister

Guard us then from shutting down our empathy
or walling off our hearts because of the glut
of unactionable misery that floods our awareness.
You have many children
in many places around this globe.
Move each of our hearts
to compassionately respond to those needs
that intersect our actual lives,
that in all places your body might be actively
addressing the pain and brokenness of this world,
each of us liberated and empowered by your Spirit
to fulfill the small part of your redemptive
work assigned to us.

Douglas McKelvey

Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
Forever.

Psalms 23:6

Being alone with ourselves is a demanding presence. We find very quickly that either we must change or we shall surely crumble under the weight of our own dissatisfaction with ourselves, under the awareness of what we could be but are not, under the impulse of what we want to be but have failed to become.

Silence does more than confront us with ourselves, however. Silence makes us wise. As we come to know ourselves better, we can only deal more gently with others.

In knowing our own struggles, we find a reverence for theirs. In knowing our own failures, we are less quick to condemn, less likely to boast, less intent on punishing, and less certain of our certainties. Then silence becomes a social virtue.

Make no doubt about it, the ability to listen to another, to sit silently in the presence of God, to give sober heed and to ponder is the nucleus of the spirituality of peace. It may, in fact, be what is most missing in a century saturated with information, saturated with noise, smothered in struggle, but short on reflection. The Word we seek is speaking in the silence within us.

Joan Chittister

Give us discernment
in the face of troubling news reports.
Give us discernment
to know when to pray,
when to speak out,
when to act,
and when to simply shut off our screens and our devices,
and to sit quietly in your presence,
casting the burdens of this world upon
the strong shoulders of the one who alone
is able to bear them up.

May our tears anoint these broken things,
and let our grief be as their consecration—
a preparation for their promised redemption,
our sorrow sealing them for that day
when you will take the ache of all creation,
and turn it inside-out,
like the shedding of an old gardener's glove.

O Lord, use our tears
to baptize what you love.

Amen.

Douglas McKelvey

More Than Anything

What can compare to the love of Jesus
who can repair every broken thing
No other One can break this darkness
no other name no other name

We need You more than anything
Jesus, we need You more than anything

Through the calm and the storm in the chaos
though the mountains will crumble You will not
Never failing Your promise eternal

We need You more than anything
Jesus, we need You more than anything

David Leonard
Jason Ingram
Leslie Jordan
Stuart Garrard

O Lord our God,
 teach our hearts this day
 where and how to see you,
 And where and how to find you.
Teach us to seek you,
 And may we love you when we find you.
Amen

St. Anselm