**Worship Plan for Mediated Joint Worship Services**

**September 6, 2020**

**GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

**Introduction**

Hello, and welcome to our mediated joint worship of the Nith Valley Ministry Area, for Sunday, September 6, the 14th Sunday after Pentecost.

This is our ninth week of mediated worship, and it is a wonderful way for the NVMA to share not only a time of worship but also a time of community, partnership, and building relationships with one another. Even though we may still be physically distanced and isolated from one another, we are united by the power of the Holy Spirit and give thanks that we are able to share our love of God, and our time, talents, and resources together.

Our worship service today includes prayers, scripture, a sermon reflection, and music. We will also celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion. If you haven’t done so already, please take a moment now to gather some bread and wine or juice into your worship space at home.

Today’s worship service will be led by our preacher, Pastor Bob Hutchison; our musician, Isabella Caskenette from St. Paul’s, Moserville; and our reader, Sister Jean Widmeyer from Zion, Stratford. I am Pastor Jeff Laustsen from Zion, Stratford and I am the liturgist today.

Once again, a warm welcome to all who have joined us for worship today. May you find spiritual strength and sustenance here for your week ahead. I invite you now to prepare your hearts and minds for worship.

**Invitation to Worship**

Although apart, we are not alone.  We gather for worship, joined in God's presence, with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.  We must admit that we have wandered from God's presence during the past week and been distracted by many things. We ask God to have mercy on us and help us as we seek to re-centre our lives on the life of Jesus.  Amen.

**Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Prayer of the Day**

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church in your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful, and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

**WORD**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

**Reading: Exodus 3:1-15**

**3**Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. **2**There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. **3**Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” **4**When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” **5**Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” **6**He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

**7**Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, **8**and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. **9**The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. **10**So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” **11**But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **12**He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

**13**But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” **14**God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” **15**God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

**Psalm 103:1-8**

**1**Bless the Lord, O my soul,  and all that is within me,  bless his holy name.
**2**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—
**3**who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
**4**who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
**5**who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

**6**The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.
**7**He made known his ways to Moses,  his acts to the people of Israel.
**8**The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

**Sermon -***THE GOD OF OUR ANCESTORS IS ALSO OUR GOD!*

Do you remember the days when you were a child and your mother or father read you Bible stories, or sitting in a Sunday School class listening to them?  Do you have a favourite Bible story?

 Bible stories are different from fairy tales or fables or make believe.  Bible stories help us know our spiritual ancestors and God’s presence with them through acts of deliverance, rescue, redemption, and salvation.  Bible stories are like seeds planted in the soil of our lives to take root and open up for us the wonder of God’s daily presence with us.  One of my favourite Bible stories is the one read today, Moses and the burning bush.

 Although they will continue, today is the last Mediated worship following the theme of ‘sitting at the feet of our spiritual ancestors.’  Why do we call them spiritual ancestors? We seem to be living in an age when ancestry is important to many people.  Perhaps ancestry makes us feel connected in some way.  A spiritual ancestor alerts us to a different connection, God’s connection with us, a living connection, where death is not an issue.

The spiritual ancestor today is Moses, the story of God calling him from a burning bush that was not burning.  It is also a striking example of how a children’s Bible story is the opening to spiritual discovery of God’s presence with us. This is the way the Psalm says it today:

*“The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses his acts to the people of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (P. 103:6-8)*

 This God: the God of Moses’ ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, gets Moses’ attention with a burning bush and tells him he is to lead his people, Israel, out of bondage in Egypt.  Moses says he can’t do the job.  He has cause to feel unworthy: born an Israelite, raised as an Egyptian prince, has become an exile, a simple shepherd, a murderer in the eyes of Israel, having murdered an Egyptian.

God had a task for Moses.  It is significant to me that it began this way. God instructed Moses, “Come no closer!  Remove the sandals from your feet for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

It seems to me that the only time we designate holy ground  today is when we bury someone.  On holy ground Moses becomes holy, like God.  This was the holy ground of the mountain of God where later Moses would bring Israel.  Our spiritual ancestry is rooted in holiness because holiness is part of God’s character.

 Here is where I would like to sit with you and explore ‘holiness’ as we experience it.  The pace and manner of our living snuffs out holiness.  The church labels many things ‘holy’, but is unable to be holy.

 Holiness is gifted to us with God’s presence.  The best way I can describe it is that is an experience of our whole being cleansing us, like Baptism, to serve God.  It is life with God.

 We find ourselves being anything but holy: troubled with fear, panic, the upheaval of family and friends and our church life, and we could go on.  There is no room for holiness.  But there is!   Is not the soil we walk on holy? Created by God?  Like our ancestor Moses we need to hear God who speaks to us through creation and many other ways. Two words come to mind immediately.  “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”  God spoke those words to keep us mindful of the goodness with which we are blessed and the goodness with which we bless one another.  To observe Sabbath is a choice each of us needs to make for himself/herself.  The other word Jesus gave us in teaching us to pray. “Father in heaven, holy is your name.”

 That’s the name God gave to Moses when he asked, “Look, when I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you’, and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’, What shall I say to them?”  “I will be who I will be.”, was the name God gave Moses.

 ‘I will be who I will be’, doesn’t sound like much of a name.  It tells me that God is the source of life and being, that I can only know about God through what God reveals to me, which makes me a student of the Scriptures.

 The Scriptures tell the story of God teaching Moses to lead the Israelites to their promised land.  Only once are we told of Moses failing “to show God’s holiness’ when he struck the rock a Meribah to bring forth water instead of commanding it.  Under God’s direction Moses led Israel to the Jordan River across from the promised land, written the law of God in a book, recited his song of praise to God, blessed Israel, and went up into Mount Nebo where he viewed the promised land and died being buried in an unknown grave.

 Is that all there is to a spiritual ancestor? No.  Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate the story of Jesus being transfigured and conversing with Moses and Elijah on a mountain top.  Our spiritual ancestors live on giving witness to God’s Messiah, Jesus Christ.  As Paul writes, “All this is from God, who reconciled himself to us through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”  It is a holy ministry because it frees us from our sinful self-seeking to initiate relationships between persons in which all things are shared in common.  Peter writes it this way, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’ own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Join me in singing the words of today’s Psalm:

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit,*

*who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

**Prayers of Intercession**

Though we pray separately in our homes, we are united in the Spirit. Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us intercede together for the church, for the earth, and for all who are in need, responding to each petition with **hear our prayer.** *A brief silence.*

Unite your church, O God. Grant us the gifts of repentance and reconciliation. Bless the cooperative work of the congregations of this ministry area. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships; guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Protect your creation, O God. Teach us ways that do not harm what you have entrusted to our care. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbors. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward laws that protect the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbors to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit (especially those we name before you …). Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbors in and through our work. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in faith. As you equipped them, equip us with your protection and power, until with them we see your salvation. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**MEAL**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ*

**Prayer for our Offerings**

Over the past week, we have received offerings by mail, drop off, or online and so we give thanks for the many gifts we have received:

Almighty God, we worship today as a scattered church, yet we are one and we are blessed. Receive the gifts we bring in gratitude for your care for us, and help us to bless you with dedication of our lives, through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

 **Blessing of Children**

God, we pray your blessing on the children of all ages whom you have entrusted to our care.  Thank you for giving them to us to love and to teach your ways.  Be with them, guard and protect them in these difficult times.  Bless them in all their learnings, so they may grow closer to you, wherever they are this week: at home, with friends, resting, at play, with toys, screens, books, and crafts.  In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

**Thanksgiving at the Table**

Loving One, compassionate Three, we offer our praise and thanksgiving for your good creation, for your presence in our brokenness, for the stories of our ancestors, and for the hope your companionship inspires.

On this day, we remember the coming of Jesus in poverty and oppression, the feeding and healing he shared, the stories of ordinary things which point us to you, and his embrace of the suffering and the dying.

We remember especially on a night of betrayal and desertion, that Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to those he was with, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.

And he took the cup after supper, again gave thanks, and gave it for them to drink, saying: This is the covenant, renewed in my blood, poured out for you and for all, for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Do this in remembrance of me.

Therefore, loving One, compassionate Three, we do remember and proclaim again his life of service and solidarity, his dying and rising, and his promise of new life, give and renewed each day.

By the coming of your Spirit in this meal, in our gathering, and in every daily interaction, strengthen our faith in your promise, inspire our grateful response, and fire us with hope for the world.

By the promise and presence of Jesus, break open our hearts to share the love you are. Pour us out in service for your hurting world. Bring creation to fulfillment and make us new.

We offer these prayers in the name of the Loving One, trusting in the faithfulness of the compassionate Three, now and always.

**Amen.**

**Lord’s Prayer**

*Though we are apart, we are made one in Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, and so we pray as one:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

**Invitation to Communion**

*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*

**Communion**

*Let us eat together: the body of Christ, bread of heaven; and the blood of Christ, cup of salvation.*

**Prayer after Communion**

Gracious God, in this meal you have gathered your scattered people, drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. Now give us courage to be your people in the world, and voice to proclaim your truth this day and always, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

**SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

**Blessing**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, ☩ Jesus, the Christ,

and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,

bless you and keep you in eternal love. Amen.

**Peace**

The peace of Christ be with you always.