**Worship Plan for Mediated Joint Worship Services**

**September 27, 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 27, the 17th Sunday after Pentecost.

We gather for worship today to celebrate and proclaim God’s love for one another. We give thanks for this time of community and relationship building. 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 Rick Brown from Trinity, Tavistock, our musician, Trevor Wagler; and our reader, Gwen Kalbfleisch, both from Zion, Philipsburg. I am Leanne Darlington, Pastor from Zion, Philipsburg 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.

**Prayer of Confession and Assurance**

Let us confess to our God who forgives and saves.

Gracious and loving God, you lived for us—we have not lived for you. You have forgiven us—we have not forgiven others. You have loved us—we have not loved ourselves nor have we loved one another. Forgive us, God. Help us to forgive. Help us to live for you. Help us to love through Christ our Lord. Amen.

People of God, *you are forgiven.* God is merciful and gracious and is Lord of us all. Reconciled to the God who loves us,let us live and love through Christ our Lord.

**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**

Let us pray.

God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32**

A reading from Ezekiel.

1The word of the Lord came to me: 2What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”? 3As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.
  25Yet you say, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? 26When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. 27Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. 28Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. 29Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is unfair.” O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?
  30Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. 31Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.

The word of the Lord.

**PSALM: Psalm 25:1-9**

 1To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
**2My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.**3Let none who look to you be put to shame; rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.
**4Show me your  ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths.**5Lead me in your  truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.
**6Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love, for they are from everlasting.**
7Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
  remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.
**8You are gracious and upright, O Lord; therefore you teach sinners in your way.** 9You lead the lowly in justice and teach the lowly your way.

**SECOND READING: Philippians 2:1-13**

A reading from Philippians.

1If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
7but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form, 8he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. 9Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,
 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.  12Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:23-32**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

23When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” 24Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ 26But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.” 27So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.
  28“What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ 29He answered, ‘I will not’; but later he changed his mind and went. 30The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, ‘I go, sir’; but he did not go. 31Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Sermon**

One hundred years ago, a man named Samuel John Stone penned one of our most enduring hymns entitled, *“The Churches One Foundation is Jesus Christ Our Lord.”* One verse states that *“The Church is God’s new creation by water and the word. ”*The waters of baptism connect the past, present and future of all Christian churches.

The waters of baptism, for over 177 years, have flowed through the lives of members and the ever-flowing ministry of Zion Lutheran Church, Philipsburg, Ontario. On the Zion Lutheran Church website you will find these words of introduction to the congregation:

*“We are a community of Lutheran believers who can trace the roots of this church back to the 1830s, when seven pioneer families from the Alsace-Lorraine areas of Germany settled here. Founded in 1843, we are members of the Nith Valley Ministry Area in the*[*Eastern Synod*](http://www.easternsynod.org/)*of the*[*Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,*](http://www.elcic.ca/)*and one of the seven original charter Lutheran churches in the area.”*

Back in the fall of 2002 – just newly called to serve the congregation of Zion Philipsburg – I remember a phone call from a family who were seeking information about their family history. They had traveled from Arizona and were staying with family in Baden. They were trying to find the grave of a relative who passed away 126 years prior. They believed this relative was member of Zion from about the late 1840’s until his death in 1876. And yes, the church did have a record of this person --Jacob Forler – *a written history of his marriage, record of communion, the baptism of his children, the confirmation of his children, and of course the recording of his death.* It was a *fascinating discovery* of the rich history of this congregation whose Christian ministry now extends some one hundred and seventy- seven years, a ministry awash in the waters of baptism.

At the time when I served Zion it was especially interesting to see the actual hand-written records of the early pastors *- you notice I didn’t say read* --because all of it was written in old German. There are records of baptisms, confirmations, communions, marriages, and deaths of former and present *flesh and blood* members of Zion from the late 1840’s --through to today. There have been over *2000 baptisms, 1,200 confirmands, over 560 marriages, and well over 700 funerals.* Zion is a church of *flesh and blood families* - past and present, lives impacted by baptismal water. One only has to stroll through its cemetery to see the 177 years of family ties, ties that include generations of families with such names as *Doering, Schmidt, Wettlaufer, Gunther, Horle, Forler, Glasser, and Berg.*

The first pastor was *Rev. Franz A. Peifer (Payfer?),* to the pastor of the first church – Rev. August Popplow. Generations of other pastors served Zion including *Rev. J. L. Kirchhofer,* pastor during the building and dedication of the present church. *Rev. J. F. Langholz* who was Zion’s longest serving pastor, for 25 years from 1887 until 1912. And I have to mention *Pastor Doug Kranz,* pastor from 82’ to 87’ -- one of my internship supervisors at St. John’s – now called Trillium Lutheran Church. Zion has had a history of calling many of its pastor’s right out of seminary, thus being an integral part of the early years of formation of its first-time pastors, including their current pastor – Pastor Leanne Darlington.

Trinity Tavistock has had a connection with Zion Philipsburg: Pastors Eric Schultz and Leanne Darlington were members of Trinity. I have served Trinity for 13 years after having served Zion for 5 years.

The 3rd verse from the 1st chapter of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, *“I thank God every time I remember you.”* --reminds us of the importance of those who have *lived* before us…and those we now live with as a congregational family.

And of course we have the *wood, and brick and mortar* of the church buildings that have been the home of Zion over this time --the *first church (made from wood) from 1850 until 1928* built at a cost of $1200 and the *second church (brick and mortar) from 1929 to the present* at a cost of $16,000. The first church was Philipsburg’s landmark for 79 years before it was dismantled in 1928, in order to accommodate a growing congregation. The original church was said to have died a *physical death,* but its *spiritual life* continued to *live* and *flourish* in its successor.

It is the waters of baptism that connects the past, present and future of God’s people and transforms lives and ministries.

Water *- what a powerful image it offers us --past, present, and future.* From *birth* through the *passage of our lives,* water *carries us, transforms us, sends us.* Water plays an important role in some of the most compelling stories in our Holy Scripture – from the promise to Noah in the flood to the faith lesson of the fishers saved by Jesus from the storm. In *Paul’s* letter to the congregation in Philippi he points out unifying components of the waters of baptism -- *“being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”* In the *gospel* reading reference is made to the baptism of John. Water *renews* us in the rite of baptism. It is one of our *gifts from God,* and in our stewardship, one of our *greatest responsibilities.* Water is the expression of God’s *blessing.* Water can also be a representation of God’s living presence *flowing* through all our lives, *filling* every dark crevice and troubled corner, the way water *finds* every crack. Our lives can be represented by water as well. Life can be a *gentle rolling wave*, or it can be turbulent *crashing foam.* You may even think of water as *constant and unrelenting in ceaseless flow --like that of God’s grace as it is poured upon us,* a *grace* which in all the circumstances of life is more than sufficient to *bless and enrich* our lives. Rejoice each day that you are baptized in the *life-giving* water of our hope and Savior, *Jesus Christ.*

When you take flesh and blood --wood, bricks and mortar – and people *washed by the waters of baptism —* you have a congregation that has *gathered* for over a century and three quarters to *praise and worship* God, and who have given their *time* and *talents* and *treasures* in thanksgiving and support of God’s church.

Baptism continues to call this congregation to be active in the ministries of *Learning, Witness, Service, Worship, Support, and Youth.* It is by the baptismal waters that we are *washed and strengthened* daily to do the ministry of God in all aspects of our lives.

Thus take time at the beginning of each day to take some water and make the sign of the cross on your forehead, reciting the words, *“As I go forth today I remember that I am baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”* As well, you may want to recite the Apostles’ Creed *daily* --by doing so you regularly confess the faith of the church, the *faith* in which we *baptize.* As the waters of baptism have *flowed* for 177 years *through the life* of this congregation and its members, - it continues to *flow today* and *into the future.*

May we be *renewed and invigorated* by the *living water* of baptism, through Christ our *hope and Savior, past, present, and future.* AMEN.

*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.* –

**Hymn of the Day-** **Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service- ELW 712**

1 Lord, whose love in humble service
bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken,
worked your mercy's perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship
not of voice alone, but heart;
consecrating to your purpose
ev'ry gift which you impart.

2 Still your children wander homeless;
still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom;
still in grief we mourn our dead.
As you, Lord, in deep compassion
healed the sick and freed the soul,
by your Spirit send your power
to our world to make it whole.

3 As we worship, grant us vision,
till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness
dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens
your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to ardent service,
your abundant life to share.

4 Called by worship to your service,
forth in your dear name we go,
to the child, the youth, the aged,
love in living deeds to show;
hope and health, good will and comfort,
counsel, aid and peace we give,
that your servants, Lord, in freedom
may your mercy know and live.

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Though we pray separately in our homes, we are united in the Spirit by the love and compassion of God. Together we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need, responding to each petition with **hear our prayer.** *A brief silence.*

In all the world, give your church unity. Inspire all the baptized with the mind of Christ. Where the church is powerful and where it struggles, shape us with humility and obedience so that your love may be at work in us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your Son took on all of bodily life in our world, even to death. Preserve and keep your creation, O God. Mend and redeem places that are polluted and damaged, so that all of creation confesses you as Lord. We especially remember all who are affected by the wildfires and climate fires in Western Canadian and the Western United States and all who have been in the path of hurricanes and tropical storms in Eastern Canada and The United States. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Turn the nations toward life. Where our ways are unfair, give us new hearts and new spirits. Where sin permeates our cultures and institutions, change our minds and teach us to trust your authority. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Our lives are yours, O God. Relieve the suffering of those who are ill in body, mind, or spirit. Defend the lives and welfare of children who are abused or neglected, hungry or exploited, bullied or lonely. We especially remember those we name either out loud or in the stillness of our hearts. ***Pause*** Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Turn us away from our own interests toward the interests of others. Fill us with your compassion and sympathy. Bless ministries of care in our communities; make us into signs of your mercy and justice for our neighbors. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Thank you for those who have gone into the kingdom ahead of us—tax collectors and prostitutes, likely and unlikely, obedient and slow to learn. By their witness, teach us to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in life and in death. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through 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 the 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.**

**Words of Institution – you can share this meal with your family or friends to remember Jesus sacrifice for us.**

On his last night, as he shared a meal with his friends,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

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

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,

shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

**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, 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;

and forgive us our trespasses

 as we forgive those,

 who trespass against us;

and 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.

**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**

Mothering God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life.

Amen.

**Peace**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**Sending Hymn- Hallelujah, We Sing Your Praises- ELW 535**

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