

Service Outline September 6th, 2020
(14th Sunday after Pentecost/ Backpack Blessing Sunday)



Welcome

Good morning and welcome everyone! ☺ It is wonderful to be in this time of worship with you this morning, and later today if you're watching this video later. During this time we are reminded that we are connected in so many ways, so welcome to all who are joining us here in Brooks, the faith community of St. David's United Church in Leduc who are joining us this morning, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland, France and around the world! Though we are not physically in the same physical location we get a sense of what is this Body of Christ that we are a part of –something much larger than just our small congregation at home. And that is a blessing.

Short announcements about being in-person

As you prepare yourself for this time of worship at home, find a comfy chair, get a candle if you have easy access to one, and light it with me as we show how God's love spreads in the world. This candle dances with the presence of the Spirit, reminding us of the warmth of the community in which God calls us to gather (even from a distance) and the light that shines with wisdom, insight, and clarity for us in our time of worship. During the week, if you're feeling alone, light this Christ candle... and be reminded of the community that surrounds you.

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

A new school year begins.

We gather today filled with new beginnings:

For new classes, teachers and friends

For seeing each other in person, some of us for the first time in months

For joining in worship together across space connected by that invisible string
and God's love

For committee meetings slowly starting up again

For a fall that we know will be full of more changes.

We join together excited to follow the Way.
Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered..."
We unite with the Spirit to worship and work.

~Max Ward.

Opening Prayer

God of freedom, God of love, God of new life:
we gather here within the sacred circle of community to learn about your love.
We want to love to one another, and we want to love you.
We know that those things go hand in hand
Help us to be your loving people.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn MV#14 "Where Two or Three are Gathered" (use shaker)

*Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there, I am there.*

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Prayer of Confession

God of Life,
You have set before us the path
but we have wandered on our own
to try to find our way.

Sometimes we are like toddlers
and we hear Your call and come back.

Other times, we are children testing boundaries,
ignoring Your call until fear finally makes us look back.

And still other times we are full of youthful rebellion,
demanding to be cut loose and set free,
not knowing how much we still need
to seek Your wisdom and guidance.

But most of all, too often we think we are adults
and have figured it all out and know our own way,
only to stumble and stray so far.

Remind us, parental God,
that we are always Your children,

that we are never fully grown up in Your sight,
that we always have much to learn.

Help us to seek You every day,
to acknowledge that we need Your wisdom and guidance,
and help us to return to the path and walk with You.

In the name of Christ,
who is our companion on this journey of faith, we pray. **Amen.**

~ written by Rev Mindi, and posted on **Rev-o-lution**. <http://rev-o-lution.org/>. Adapted by Esther Crews.

Words of Assurance

We grow and learn each day of our lives. Sometimes it's ok to admit that we cannot journey this life alone. When we do, God is there. God is there to lift us up. God is there to guide us. God is there to forgive us and remind us of the grace freely given to us. So don't be afraid. Try again, and make this world a better place.

Backpack Blessing

It is time for our Blessing of the Backpacks!

Show me your backpacks! Hold them up in the air if you brought one! For those of you joining us at home -please share a picture of your backpack (and possibly its tag) in the comment box!

I brought mine as well!

Backpacks are so useful! They help us carry everything we need for a successful school year. What do backpacks carry?

Laptops, invitations, homework, books, pencils, lunches, and so much more!

Backpacks are an important tool for us, and by the end of the year (or multiple years if your backpack manages to last) it can tell us a story.

My dad got me my backpack in 2008 just before I went off to university to start my bachelor degree. It's been with me on all my travels ever since! It's been to different continents, been on planes, trains and automobiles. It's carried everything I've needed... and it's starting to show some wear and tear. But this backpack has never failed me.

In the same way -God goes with us wherever we go, God is our rock, our strength, our protector, a friend who comforts us, and is always with us; especially in this new school year that looks and feels so different.

Our tags this year say "You are Loved." Loved for who you are. Loved for wanting to learn. Loved for being loving to your classmates, teachers and friends. Loved even when you might be a little scared about Covid and all the changes in the classroom this year. So we will bless these tags and your backpacks.

But what does Blessing mean again? Shall we do a quick recap?

B -is for Belong. To be blessed by God means that you are one of God's children.

L -is for Love. You are blessed by God because God loves you! [and so are all your friends because God's love is for everyone!]

E -is for Experience. Through the act of being blessed, you will experience God's love and care for you. Sometimes it's a feeling, other times it will just be the reminder by looking at your backpack tag that you are not alone and have a whole lot of people around you that care for you.

S - is for Success. Through the act of being blessed, God wants the best for you and will help you be successful. So do your best in school! It will open many possibilities for you.

S -is for Support. You are a blessed child of God, and as any parent God wants to support you. Don't forget to pray for help when you need it!

I -is for Inspire. God's blessing on this school year will inspire you to learn in person or online. For God is good and there are good things that happen, even when online might not be our favourite thing.

N -is for New. This is a new school year, be encouraged to make new friends! Share your blessings! Maybe you can even show a friend your backpack tag and put a smile on their face to let them know they are Loved too! (And, like friendship bracelets, if you have a friend at school that wants a backpack tag too –let me know!! We'll make sure you get one for them ☺)

G -is for God. It is God who blessed you, so rejoice and be glad for who God is in your life. Even hard things are made a bit easier with God in our lives.

God's blessing is something pretty special! Are you ready to receive it?

Explain how it will work with the signs

Put your backpacks in front of you –and here I have the tags that will be handed out, and a picture of the tags that were made for the children of St. David's United Church. We remember that like Communion, God's blessing and grace extends beyond space and time and works through whatever we have.

Hear the blessing:

As our children and youth prepare to begin a new school year, we consider the backpacks to be carried to and from school. These backpacks will contain work to be done, work that has been returned, and tools to assist them in learning. We also consider the technology that will be even more prominent in their learning this year: computers and tablets, internet and webcams.

We give thanks to God for books and computers and all of the tools that help us learn.

We thank God for the gift of learning!

We ask God's blessing on the new school year, that it may be a time when we appreciate and fully engage God's gift of learning.

We learn in school, in church, in our families, in our community, and in our world.

We thank God for the gift of learning!

We ask God to bless our schools and teachers; the kids and their classmates; the principals, counselors, and librarians.

We ask God to bless those who prepare lunches, drive students to school, and keep schools clean and safe.

We thank God for the gift of learning!

Let us pray. Loving God, we pay attention to the children and youth in our congregation today who are ready to receive your blessings as they commit themselves to study and learning in the year ahead. We know that you will be with them every step of the way. We rejoice with them as they receive their backpack tags; may these remind these students that they are loved. Help these students to do their best and show others your love in all that they say and do each day. We pray for the teachers, students, and staff, that they may stay healthy. May all of us open our hands, hearts, and minds, ready to be guided by you, ready to learn together, and ready to grow in our love for You. We pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

Scripture Readings

Romans 13:8-12 (New Living Translation)

Love Fulfills God's Requirements

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law. ⁹ For the commandments say, "You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not covet."^[a] These—and other such commandments

—are summed up in this one commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”^[b] ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law.

¹¹ This is all the more urgent, for you know how late it is; time is running out. Wake up, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is almost gone; the day of salvation will soon be here. So remove your dark deeds like dirty clothes, and put on the shining armor of right living.

Exodus 12:1-14 (International Children's Bible)

Passover

12 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ² “This month will be the first month of the year for you. ³ Both of you are to tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth day of this month each man must get one lamb. It is for the people in his house. ⁴ There may not be enough people in his house to eat a whole lamb. Then he must share it with his closest neighbor. There must be enough lamb for everyone to eat. ⁵ The lamb must be a one-year-old male. It must have nothing wrong with it. This animal can be either a young sheep or a young goat. ⁶ Keep the animal with you to take care of it until the fourteenth day of the month. On that day all the people of the community of Israel will kill these animals. They will do this as soon as the sun goes down. ⁷ The people must take some of the blood. They must put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes. These are the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ On this night they must roast the lamb over a fire. Then they must eat it with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the lamb raw or boiled in water. Roast the whole lamb over a fire—with its head, legs and inner organs. ¹⁰ You must not leave any of it until morning. But if any of it is left over until morning, you must burn it with fire.

¹¹ “This is the way you must eat it: You must be fully dressed as if you were going on a trip. You must have your sandals on, and you must have your walking stick in your hand. You must eat it in a hurry. This is the Lord’s Passover.

¹² “That night I will go through the land of Egypt. I will kill all the firstborn of animals and people in the land of Egypt. I will punish all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. ¹³ But the blood will be a sign on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Nothing terrible will hurt you when I punish the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ “You are always to remember this day. Celebrate it with a feast to the Lord. Your descendants are to honor the Lord with this feast from now on.

Sermon ***"Time is a God thing"***

"The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month will be the first month of the year for you..." So starts the reading from Exodus chapter 12 verses 1 and 2. God is marking time. Time for something new. The lectionary leaves out the story of all the plagues and so I read you more than just today's lectionary text so you can hear it within its broader context. It's not a very nice story (as more bible stories are), and yet this is a foundational story within the Judaic faith. The Passover, that final meal while the final plague was underway before the Israelites fled Egypt for good, is a feast that is celebrated every year. It is a celebration of deliverance, liberation, freedom, and promise. A time to remember who God is, who God has saved, is saving, and will save. I could explain this text by explaining in detail how the Israelites took the lamb, smeared the blood on the doorway, how they cooked the meat, ate the bitter herbs, and unleavened bread dressed ready to leave at a moment's notice. A tradition many of us as Christians are not so familiar with. But every part of God's story has meaning –and as the first Sunday in September, with back to school, the start of committees and other 'beginnings', it is fitting to talk about 'time.'

"This month will be the first month of the year for you..." God was giving the Israelites a calendar... something to mark their lives around. As a people that lived their lives in accordance with the skies above them –namely the moons cycle, they would have been familiar with the waxing and waning of the moon, the full moon, and the new moon. Just like the skies change, so do our lives –never static, even when we feel 'stuck.' The moon showed them that renewal is possible, that even though the moon darkens, it will brighten again. The Passover is a way of marking this 'new' time. When they were set free from Egyptian time. The Egyptians would no longer control their calendar, would no longer use them as their slaves. They would be able to choose what they could do with their time.

As we heard in today's story, getting to that point was not easy. God wanted Pharaoh to let the people go but Pharaoh was stubborn and wanted to keep them as slaves. It took a lot of 'convincing' –so much so that this story makes us uncomfortable. We wonder about God's intentions... but we are reminded throughout the Bible because of this story that God is now, "the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt." A God who always sides with the oppressed, the widow, the orphan, the vulnerable, the enslaved, the unseen, the isolated and the weak. As people of privilege we may not always be aware of the depth of that God, but we are still aware of the God that is always there for us in our time of need, hurt and pain.

"This month will be the first month of the year for you..." Telling time kept people connected to God and to each other. The Passover would now be celebrated every year and that kept ritual and connection in place. Does time do the same for us?

During this Covid time –keeping that connection has been drastically altered. We do not mark our time, our weeks in the same way, since we’ve been unable to meet on Sundays. But God is still giving us signs of meaningful relationship. How our circles and connections can reach new boundaries by sharing community online. How school time, even though the daily rituals are different, can still be a place of friendship and learning and safety. How love can conquer all. A love that fulfills all of God’s commandments. A love that heals, mends, builds, and sets us apart from others. As Christians, we may not follow all of the laws we read about in the Old Testament –but through Jesus and the love he showed the world, we are given a concrete example of how to live out those laws.

Like the reminder on your backpack tags –know that you are loved, that you have love to share with the world, and this school time and covid time are still God time. At work in the world through you and through me to help those who need it.

For that we give God thanks and praise.
Amen.

Hymn VU#131 "If Our God Had Simply Saved Us" vs. 1-3, 15

If our God had simply saved us, merely brought us out of Egypt, only opened up our prison:

Da-yei-nu

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

If our God had split the Red Sea: made a way through walls of water, only opened up the waters: Da-yei-nu.

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

If our God has kept our feet dry, kept our heads above the waters, kept us safely without drowning: Da-yei-nu.

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

But, our God, who holds the banquet, calls the whole world into freedom: opens up the new creations: Da-yei-nu!

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

Da-da-yei-nu, da-da-yei-nu, Da-da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu, Da-yei-nu, da-yei-nu!

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WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Prayers of the People

Creator of heaven and earth, lover of each and every soul,
we are filled with gratitude for the blessings of this life.
For making us in your image to love and care for one another,
we give you thanks.
For the gift of Christ, who redeems and guides us,
and who gives us a pattern for everyday living, we praise you.
Hear us now as we pray for situations where your love and grace are very much needed in
the world you love.

We pray for the church in this place and around the world, facing so many new challenges
to respond to so many enduring needs...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

We pray for this beautiful planet, the fragile home we share with all living things...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

For those who rule in this city/town/area and the nations of the world, that they may find
the wisdom and courage to do justice in the decisions they make...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

For those who serve as teachers, healers and caregivers facing new situations this fall, and
for all students who return to school in very different circumstances...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

For the homeless and the hungry, for the unemployed and the anxious, and for all who have
become more vulnerable through the pandemic...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

For those who are sad and those who are alone or feeling isolated...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

For the powerless and oppressed, and those caught up in destructive relationships or
unjust political systems...

(Keep silence for at least 10 seconds)

And for the concerns we bear on our hearts this day...

(A longer time of silence)

Eternal God, we thank you for those who have gone ahead of us and showed us some measure of your eternal love. Keep us always in communion with you, and with your people from every time and place.

So we join together through actions as we pray the words that Jesus taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer (*with actions*)

Our Father/ Mother/ Creator, 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, 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Offering

God gave us the greatest gift –life! Earth! Breath! Each other! Life is hard sometimes, but there are little gifts that keep us going, that keep us loving, that keep us caring about ourselves, one another and the world. God has given us the gift of grace, so we can keep treating each and every person we meet as God treats us. So think about what gift you can offer the world, to make it a better place for all.

Your donations today support Brooks United Church programs and building operations, as well as outreach projects and around the world.

*You can donate by **e-transfer** to offeringbuc@shaw.ca, or you can **mail cash or cheque** to*

*Brooks United Church
507 3rd Avenue West,
Brooks, AB.
T1R 0B2*

*You can also **drop off** your offering at the church Tuesday-Friday between 9am and 12noon because Angela and Rev. Esther will still be in the office. Tax receipts are issued at the end of the year for donations over \$20 if your name and address are provided.*

Doxology MV#196 “We Will Take What You Offer”

*We will take what you offer, we will live by your word;
we will love one another and be fed by you, Lord.
We will take what you offer, we will live by your word;
we will love one another and be fed by you Lord.*

Prayer of Dedication

God of love, receive these gifts, offered in a spirit of generosity and humility and use them for the work that you long to do in the world. Amen.

Hymn MV#30 “It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker”

It’s a song of praise to the Maker, the thrush sings high in the tree.

*It’s a song of praise to the Maker, the gray whale sings in the sea,
And by the Spirit you and I can join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.*

It’s a call of life to the Giver when waves and waterfalls roar.

*It’s a call of life to the Giver when high tides break on the shore,
And by the Spirit you and I can join our hands to the holy cry
and wave, wave, wave to the Maker too.*

It’s a hymn of love to the Lover; the bumblebees hum along.

*It’s a hymn of love to the Lover; the summer breeze joins the song,
And by the Spirit you and I can join our hum to the holy cry
and hum, hum, hum, to the Maker too.*

It’s the chorus of all creation; it’s sung by all living things.

*It’s the chorus of all creation; a song the universe sings,
And by the Spirit you and I can join our feet to the holy cry
and walk, walk, walk, for the Maker too.*

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Adapted by Esther Crews for this service.

Announcements

- Please join us for worship next Sunday, September 13th on Facebook Live and the Website.
- Please check out the Bedtime Story with Rev. Esther

Benediction

Go into the world knowing that you are loved by an awesome God,
being taught by one of the most inspiring teachers Jesus Christ,
and given the courage to take on each new day by the Spirit.
Go now in peace, hope and love as faithful witnesses.
Amen.

Postlude: Shalom Chaverim

romans 12:9-21

Don't just
pretend to
love others.
Really love
them.

 prayeveryday.show

Have a Blessed Sunday!