



Camrose United Church
Sunday January 31, 2021
Coming into Holy Places.

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Candle Lighting

We light the Christ Candle, aware of God around, among, & within us. In a moment of silence, we prepare ourselves to celebrate God's presence in our community.

Coming into Worship

In the faith stories shared through the ages,
and in our current life experiences
we are encouraged to listen for God's voice
and to respond to it.

During this 'ordinary' time of the church
we look at our faith stories so that
we can learn and grow in our faith
and know God's love.

In this time of worship that we share together,
may our understanding of God's presence
give us comfort and support in our discomfort.

May we be open to seek truth and wisdom
about ourselves and our neighbours.

Let us trust that God can make all places holy.
May our hearts be drawn toward
places that challenge us
to find and follow the Holy in
all our days and actions.
Come, let us worship and learn together

Hymn: ♪ VU313 God, Whose Almighty Word

Scripture Reading:

Psalm 111 Inclusive Bible

111 Allelulia!

I will thank you, YHWH, with all my heart
in the meeting of the just and their assembly.

2 Great are your works,

to be pondered by all who love them.

3 Majestic and glorious are your works,
and your justice stands firm forever.

4 You make us remember your wonders—
you are compassion and love.

5 You give food to those who revere you,
keeping your Covenant ever in mind.

6 You reveal to your people the power of your actions
by giving them the lands of the nations as their inheritance.

7 The works of your hands are truth and justice,
and all your precepts are sure,

8 standing firm forever and ever,
and carried out uprightly and faithfully.

9 You have sent deliverance to your people
and established your Covenant forever.

Your Name is holy and awe-inspiring!

10 Reverence for YHWH is the beginning of wisdom –
and those who have it prove themselves wise.

Your praise will last forever!

Wondering:

Listening to this song of faith, I wonder....

Are we looking for God's great works in our living?

Are we appreciating them, pondering them?

How are we nourished by God?

How are we sharing wisdom by loving God?

Where have we experienced

the holiness and awesomeness of God?

Prayer for Awareness and God's grace.

O God,

We remember in the stories of our faith ancestors when they thought that you only lived in the synagogues and temples.

We now know that this is not true.

You live in all of the world around us.

You live within us.

Yet we forget.

We say that we must meet you with certain walls.

We forget that you are waiting for us to meet you in people that need care and compassion.

We say that we must meet you with certain rituals.

We forget that the rituals of offered food, shelter and forgiveness are what you treasure most.

We say that we look for your presence.

We forget to open our eyes and hearts to see you around us, before us, within us, in the mountains, the prairies, the food banks, the shelters, the hospitals and so much more.

Forgive us God.

Open our hearts to your Holy invitations that surround us every day.

Open our ears to hear the wisdom you share with us

Lift our courage to live that wisdom in your world.

May our eyes see your Holy presence

in all the corners of the world:

where we are and where you want us to be.

Amen.

Words of Assurance

On this Holy Earth, in this life filled with Holy possibilities
God sees what we cannot.

God sees the full extent of the struggles we face.

God sees, loves, empowers, and keeps us in grace.

God's forgiveness is ageless and abundant.

God is with us. We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

Scripture Reading:

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 Common English Bible

15 The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from your community, from your fellow Israelites. He's the one you must listen to. 16 That's exactly what you requested from the Lord your God at Horeb, on the day of the assembly, when you said, "I can't listen to the Lord my God's voice anymore or look at this great fire any longer. I don't want to die!"

17 The Lord said to me: What they've said is right. 18 I'll raise up a prophet for them from among their fellow Israelites—one just like you. I'll put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 19 I myself will hold accountable anyone who doesn't listen to my words, which that prophet will speak in my name. 20 However, any prophet who arrogantly speaks a word in my name that I haven't commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet must die.

Mark 1:21-28 Common English Bible

Jesus throws a demon out

21 Jesus and his followers went into Capernaum.

Immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and started teaching. 22 The people were amazed by his teaching, for he was teaching them with authority, not like

the legal experts.

23 Suddenly, there in the synagogue, a person with an evil spirit screamed, 24 “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God.”

25 “Silence!” Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. “Come out of him!” 26 The unclean spirit shook him and screamed, then it came out.

27 Everyone was shaken and questioned among themselves, “What’s this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands unclean spirits and they obey him!” 28 Right away the news about him spread throughout the entire region of Galilee.

Scripture is our song for the journey,
the living word passed on from generation to generation
to guide and inspire.

**God calls us to be doers of the word
and not hearers only.**

Reflection:

What makes a place Holy for you?

Is it because you can sense a comfort, a power, a peace in it? Is it because you meet like-minded people in it? Is it because it holds good memories for you?

What makes a person Holy to you?

Are they someone you can rely on?

Do they encourage you to be better, to be engaged?

Have you received wisdom from them that has helped you through tough places in life?

What is Holy for you?

For me it is an opportunity to meet a person or a place that influences my faith and my living. It can be a challenge that changes directions for me. It can be a moment to connect to

my inner turmoil and peace that leads me forward into seeing and being more in the world.

There are holy places that have offered me those things: St. Nicholas Cathedral in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England where I felt the rightness of moving into ministry; the power of the waves of the North Sea as I stand on beaches or piers that remind me I'm a very small part of God's story; Buffalo Lake at summer camp where there are moments of deep peace and joyful laughter.

There are holy people who have met me in life: who have shown me how to be patient; who have held me back when I haven't been patient; who have offered me a different point of view that has opened my eyes to experiences; who have welcomed me in; and blessed me away on new journeys.

Holy doesn't have to be in four walls. In many, many ways that's the last place it should be.

Aren't we learning that? Aren't we learning that it's not the places but the people who we miss? Aren't we learning to look for the goodness, the best, the comfort where we are?

In Psalm 111 we hear a list of miraculous ways that God shows up in nourishing our heart and soul, in the richness of the cultural heritages and traditions we have learned, in the ways we act justly toward one another in community. We hear how the Holiness in God is experienced in recognizing God's presence in the every day. We hear a song of gratitude for what surrounds us.

Is Holiness found in Gratitude?

In Deuteronomy we hear that there are prophets, voices, who know God's love, People within our community who can support each other even in communities that are exhausted and tired. We don't always hear them do we? Their gifts in

community are sometimes hidden in quietness, sometimes hidden in loud passion. Yet these Holy Ones are the ones who send cards to the sick and sorrowing; who call people to add a caring to someone's day; who remind us of our responsibility to stand up for God's good earth and God's people. Who would you name as God's voice, God's carer, God's justice seeker in our community?

Is Holiness found in our neighbour?

In our reading from the Gospel of Mark today... what catches our attention is the flamboyant, noisy, disturbing incident. Someone clearly in distress disturbs a quiet group of listeners. I wonder if that distraction draws us away from seeing Holiness at work. Because at either end of this reading people see Jesus in a new light. They recognize that he speaks their language, he draws attention to what is needed to be seen in ways that open up possibilities instead of confusing people. This prophet opens up the way to God.

Now, the writer of the Gospel of Mark also uses this reading to illustrate how Jesus would use his gifts to push out, remove, the corruption in systems. In the children's version of this story, Jesus recognizes a person in distress and gently leads them away to help them find a way to let go of anger and fear within them.

In this story there is a sense of Holiness found in speaking clearly and relief in understanding, in supporting people to find for themselves what will bring them strength and courage.

Is Holiness found by looking past the noise and having new understandings of who we are?

Today I'm not in the sanctuary of the Camrose United Church. That is, indeed, a beautiful and Holy space that

offers peace and comfort to many. But today I'm in the kitchen.

Yes, I'm in the four walls of a church building – but it's very cold outside and as Holy as beautiful snow-covered trees may be, I just can't do that for you today.

But this place is Holy too. This is a place where people gather to work together, to provide sustenance and welcome to each other. This, and the C.E. Hall, are places where stories are told and shared, where hospitality and laughter and sorrow weave together.

This is a place where we meet gratitude, where we meet our neighbour, where we hear words that we understand and that bring alive the spirit of God in community.

Wherever you find yourself today, look for the Holy. In the quietness, in the phone calls, in prayers offered, in the opportunities to be that and more for your neighbour.

Holiness is the spirit of God that winds around us wherever we are, whoever we are.

Amen.

☪ Hymn: ♪ Simply to Be.

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Offering Invitation

As we recognize today that God's presence
is in our everyday living,
we also recognize that we are called to be
the physical embodiment
of that presence in the world.

Let God be in our open eyes,
open hands and open hearts
as we offer the best we can for God's people.

**May the gifts of
our hearts, our labour, our treasure
enable the church to be
the light of God's Holy love in the world.**



Prayer of Dedication:

Holy God,
In the holy places of our homes that are your homes,
with the love of family and friends holding us together,
we remember you are near
and offer our gifts of gratitude to you.

We remember our abundance.

**We come with hope and faith
to offer what we have, do what we can,
to be partners in your holy creation. Amen.**

Prayers from God's People, For God's People

Hymn: ♪ VU#619 *Healer of our Every Ill.*

Chorus, vs. 1, Chorus.

Holy God
who loves us, and guides us, and lights our way:

Your Holy Spirit surrounds us in all of our days.
You hold us together when we would fall apart.
You hold us apart when togetherness crushes us.
You hold us in love in all times, trials and places.
You hold us and we are grateful.

We pray for your people:
For all those that you shine through.
For all those that you shine for.
For those of us who need to slow down
to recognize your Holy moments
in the silence, in the ordinary.
For those who need to hurry up
and recognize your Holy moments
in the world around them.

May your Holiness inspire us to be your love.

Hymn: ♪ VU#619 Healer of Our Every Ill. vs. 2, Chorus.

We pray for leaders in our world:
That they will recognize the authority of love
in all that they offer the world.
That they will see those opportunities
to lift up, to support, to care for those
they have committed to.
That they will write words of compassion and equity
making space for holiness to shine through.

May your Holiness inspire them to be your love.

Hymn: ♪ VU#619 Healer of Our Every Ill. vs.3, Chorus.

We pray for
those for whom life is unfair, unbalanced, unsafe.
The world is not yet living your dream.
In the world we share, all are not equal:
lives are disrupted by violence, by illness, by death.
May those who are hurting, those who are sorrowing,
feel your love surround them.
May those who support them
know your care and strength
as they offer the gifts you have created in them
to hold and heal broken bodies and hearts.

May your Holiness inspire them to be your love.

Hymn: 🎵 VU#619 Healer of Our Every Ill. vs. 4, Chorus.

We pray for ourselves.
That we will open our hearts to feel your spirit alive in us,
That we will work hard
to value all your people equally.
That your love will give us
the courage and power and care
as you have shown us.
That we will see your presence surround us
and encourage us to be grateful for all that we have
May your Holiness inspire us to be your love.

**God of hearts and homes, be with us and within us
so that we may know the holiness of each person and
place we encounter. Amen.**

Hymn: 🎵 VU#619 Healer of Our Every Ill.
Chorus.

✠ Sending Forth and Blessing

In the reality of life,
there are Holy moments and places
waiting for us to recognize and live into them
God is ready to help us find our moment,

May the creative love of God,
the inviting path of Jesus,
the power of the Holy Spirit
pull us into a life of abundance,
gratitude and blessings
and be with us now and always.
Amen.

Changing the Christ Candle:

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth, showing us where we are and where we are meant to be. The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with us wherever we go.

✠ Sending Song: 🎵 You Come to Us As One Unknown.

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Inspired by:

Seasons of the Spirit™ SeasonsFUSION Advent • Christmas • Epiphany 2020–
2021

Gathering, Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2020-2021

