

BEACHBURG PASTORAL CHARGE
United Church of Canada
November 15th, 2020
Trinity ~ 9:30 am; St. Andrew's ~ 11:00 am
Proper 28 – 24th Sunday after Pentecost

Minister: Rev. Kevin Moratz
Ministers: The People of the Congregation
Organist: Heather Campbell
Pianists: Barry Stephen, Murray Gutz

Our Shared Mission Statement

The congregations of St. Andrew's & Trinity United Churches celebrate and share God's accepting love known to us through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit calls us to discern God's Word as we reach out with concern and compassion to others, seeking justice, healing and hope for the world.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Lighting of the Christ Candle

We are a people of light. We are called to bring light into all the shadowed places of living. We light this candle, remembering that Jesus is the light of the world.

Introit – Holy, Holy, Holy

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

We gather once again in the presence of our gracious and loving God, aware of the beauty of the world around us.

As we worship together today, we hear Jesus call us to love and serve others.

May we experience anew the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit as we encounter our God in music, scripture, prayer and preaching.

As we follow the path of Jesus, so that we might be renewed, restored and equipped for all of life's challenges.

Come, Let us worship together in prayer.

Gathering Prayer

All: Lord, we come before you today to stop and take a deep breath in your presence. We come in the midst of life with school, work, health and family pressures. We come to be re-energized; seeking knowledge, friendship, healing and peace. For whatever reason we find ourselves here Lord, may we be open to you and to others around us, so that we may experience your love and will. In your Holy name, Amen.

Hymn: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

- 1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, who rules all creation;
O my soul, praise him, at all times your health and salvation.
Come, all who hear: brothers and sisters draw near,
joining in glad adoration.
- 2 Praise to the Lord who will prosper our work and defend us;
surely his goodness and mercy will daily attend us:
ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
who out of love will befriend us.
- 3 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen sound from God's people again:
gladly with praise we adore him.

Minute For Mission

Ministry of Music – One Day a-Time 93 Year Old Nita Talley and her son Gary
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNc6WI636XU>

Prayer of Confession - **Waiting and Watching**

You call me to wait on You, Lord,
but I get tired of waiting.
Your answers to my prayers,
Your call for me to serve You,
the promise of Your coming Kingdom,
they all seem to take so long.

You tell me to watch for Your coming, Lord,
but I'm not sure how to prepare for...
a thief in the night,
an undisclosed time,
and Your disconcerting habit of secrecy and mystery.

Yet, something inside whispers
that You're not all that hard to find;
That You're *a/ways* coming to me,
and that both the waiting and the watching,
are more about being open to You now,
than about trying not to be surprised in the future.

And so I will keep waiting,
and I'll try to stay alert,
so that I can catch the glimpses of Your glory
that fill my day, every day. Amen.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Matthew 25:1-13 (NIV)

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

⁹ "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

¹⁰ "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

¹² "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

¹³ "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Meditation

Don't Miss the Wedding

Did I ever tell you the story of the ten hunters? Call them virgin hunters if you wish, because this was their first time at the hunt camp. No one knows how they got together, because they were so different. They didn't seem to like each other much, and didn't treat each other very well. Five of them were pretty nice guys - the other five though were - well, - if you have ever noticed that one "no trespassing" sign that tries to cover a half a mile of road frontage, these five, are the kind of guys that crossed the fence right under that one sign.

Anyway, its about 4:15 in the afternoon on their first day in Camp. One of the few articulate and vocal of the less desirable five, Fred, suddenly broke the silent reverie: "We've got nothing to drink," he said. "Could you guys lend us a dozen of yours? We had no idea hunting would take this long." You could hear a pin drop.

Then the wiser five, almost in unison, shouted back across the snoring dogs and the crackling fire: "No way. We barely have enough for ourselves. The store is still open. Go buy some for yourselves."

Well, it took longer than they thought to get to town and back. The roads were snow covered and there was a long line up at the store, even though it was hunting season, and by the time they got back it was dark. They were stunned to see in their headlights, as they drove into the camp, three bucks and two doe, hanging from the tree. "You guys hadn't been gone five minutes when they showed up. It was so exciting. It was over in minutes. We each shot one. That's our limit. We'll enjoy the evening together and then pack up and leave for home in the morning. That's all the hunting for this year."

Needless to say, the five foolish hunters were speechless, and slightly sobered from their experience. (although the thought that they would each receive 1/10th of 3 bucks and two does made the evening go a little better.)

Pure fiction, I promise you, and offered in good fun. I changed the names to protect the guilty.

If Jesus' story of the five wise and five foolish virgins was only so simple. But, of course it is not. It is a difficult parable for us. I think that there is a fairly basic reason why this parable is so difficult. Not many of us (particularly in churches like ours) give much thought to the return of the bridegroom – in other words to the second coming of Christ.

If you have ever got up at 3 or 4 in the morning on a sleepless night and happened to turn on the TV you may have come across some Evangelists like Kenneth Copeland and some other guy talking excitedly over the breakfast table about the Second Coming of Christ as if it were the only thing in the whole world that mattered.

As one minister writes:

Today, I believe we have the same problem the early church faced. Most people today have lost faith (if they ever held such a faith) in the notion that Christ will return soon to square everything away. The more conservative churches may still await an imminent second coming, but most people don't spend a lot of time looking to the clouds for Jesus.

Another minister, Carol Peterson writes:

Speaking not as a scholar or even a pastor but as a person of faith, I find that there are many times (even daily?) that I question and wonder whether I am a fool for waiting and watching and working so hard. Those are the moments when I am most glad that GOD hangs on to ME and not the other way around ...

She continues:

I would like to submit that faith is continuing to wait even when we're not sure we believe any more; continuing to wait and be ready even while wondering whether, after 2000 years, Jesus ever will come for us.

And that comment that she makes "that faith is continuing to wait and be ready even when we're not sure we believe anymore" is what I think makes this parable so attractive and so useful for us. We are all caught up in this waiting process. It's not just waiting for Christ to come at the end of time. It is waiting for a fresh visitation from God, a word of hope, a word of comfort, a sign of encouragement that things are not as bad as they seem.

But it is tough waiting. It was very tough for those ten bridesmaids waiting. I have spent a few Saturday afternoons with the groom and best man waiting for the bride to come, and getting more agitated by the moment as it gets to be two minutes after three and then five after. It's all I can do to keep them calmed down.

In the time of this parable, the bride waited at a designated place for the bridegroom to come. She waited there with all her bridesmaids (in this case, all ten of them).

I don't know whether it is true, but I have read that the groom took some perverse pleasure in being late, maybe several hours, or perhaps even a day or two. The fun they say was to catch the bridal party napping, so maybe he would wait till midnight. (One scholar says the delay was often

caused by arguing with the bride's parents over the dowry – the price paid). At any rate, the custom was that at any moment the bridal party was to be ready to go out into the street to meet the bridegroom. They would process to their new home where the wedding was to take place, and when everyone was inside, the door was shut. Late comers were turned away.

It must have been tough waiting for the unexpected, when you never knew when it would happen. It seems like I've spent most of my life with that hanging over me, wondering if someone would call, wondering if someone would ask me to do something, wondering if I would be adequate to their expectations, and be able to fulfil them. It is very tough waiting. The only way I think the parable suggests that we can keep our sanity in this whole process of waiting which consumes so much of our life's energy and time, is to prepare ourselves.

The challenge here for us is to keep enough oil on hand for the lamps when the bridegroom appears, to roll up our sleeves and work for the kingdom that is always coming and breaking into history.

This is not always easy as a people genuinely afraid for our own personal future, perhaps facing serious illness, surgery, loss of employment or maybe even just navigating this pandemic. Each of us, needs to hear the good news that the bridegroom will come, that the love of God will continue to appear in our lives in surprising and unexpected ways:

So How do we prepare for the visitation of Christ in our lives.

- *—Jesus Christ comes when we live in hope and never give up.*
- *—Jesus Christ comes when we as faithful disciples express love and compassion and work for justice.*
- *—Jesus Christ comes when critically ill people know they are ultimately safe in God's love.*
- *—Heaven breaks into earth when faithful women and men live in hope and give themselves to the work of the kingdom.*

Years ago I used to watch a show on TV called ER. I remember one episode where Peter Benton, a surgeon was deeply saddened at the critical condition of an infant he had operated on. He made a mistake, and she probably would die now. He quietly approached her in ICU, and looking down on her began to whisper the words of the 23rd Psalm. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want ..." But he didn't know the rest of the words. He walked away filled with sadness, and saying to himself, "I don't remember the words ... I don't remember the words"

Some of us have let the bottom fall out of our resources, and no longer have the words that will help us to be prepared. The oil has run out. Others have hung on to the wrong words, the wrong concepts about God and faith. A common bumper sticker in a Bible belt south of the border says: "God is coming – and boy is he mad."

Some of us have missed the joy that is at the heart of faith. We view the coming of Christ – whether continually and daily or at some end time – as a time of dread. I read this week that:

Most of us would rather believe in a God we'll be fed to rather than a God who feeds us. Jesus said the day of the Lord would be more like a wedding, like a banquet to which all are invited, but for which not all are prepared. As the late American priest Robert Capon put it in his book on the parables:

Watch, therefore, Jesus says at the end of the parable, for you know neither the day nor the hour. When all is said and done – when we have scared ourselves silly with the now-or-never urgency of faith and the once-and-always finality of judgement – we need to take a deep breath and let it out with a laugh.

Because what we are watching for is a party. And that party is not just down the street making up its mind when to come to us. It is already hiding in our basement, banging on our water pipes, and laughing its way up our cellar stairs. The unknown day and hour of it finally bursting into the kitchen and roistering its way through the whole house is not dreadful; it is all part of the divine lark of grace. God is not our mother-in-law, coming to see whether her wedding-present china has been chipped. He is a funny Old Uncle with a boisterous laugh, a salami under one arm and a loaf of bread under the other. We do indeed watch for him, but only because it would be such a pity to miss all the fun.

This past Wednesday was Remembrance day so let me close with a song that was made popular during WW2 by Vera Lynn who passed away just this past June at the age of 103 years. It talks of tomorrow, and love and laughter, and is so appropriate for the season.

*There'll be bluebirds over,
the white cliffs of Dover,
tomorrow, just you wait and see.*

*There'll be love and laughter,
and peace ever after,
tomorrow, just you wait and see.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Song – *The White Cliffs of Dover* – Vera Lynn
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89487uG13Ro>

Dedication of Offering

**Gather the gifts of our hands and hearts, living Spirit.
Use these gifts to build not monuments to your distant glory,
but testaments to your intimate love. Amen.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

As for you, O God - you did not keep earth waiting -
When darkness covered her shores,
and chaos hurried to destroy

As for you,
You did not keep silent when you knew a word,
Was all the difference between life and death

As for you
You did not hide when discoveries threatened to change
The world we thought we knew

As for you
You did not keep away
When wanderers walked the earth
In search of home and purpose

As for you
You did not lie still
When the faithful few departed
And even prophets were afraid

As for you
You did not leave us
But came as one of us
In the hour of deepest need

As for you
You did not let death contain you
But rose in garden and city street
Love and hope in your wake

So to you is due our praise
Our thanks, our hearts
To you is the glory now and always

From all peoples and places of earth

As for me - As for me, Lord
You know me better than I know myself
As for me I would serve the Lord
Put off waiting - Find my voice - Enter life in its fullness
Offer hope where there is none - Take the hand of friend and stranger
So for the courage to do all this - Hear my prayer

As for me and my household, my church, my community
As for us together though often apart
You know our strengths and weaknesses
Our gifts and shortcomings

As for us we would serve the Lord
In the small things
Of friendship, Kind words, Visiting the sick
Caring for the grieving
So for the love to do all this Hear our prayer

As for us we would serve the Lord
In the big issues
Of poverty – War – Violence - Greed
Giving where there is need
Speaking for those who cannot be heard
Challenging the system that divides your world
So for the patience to do all this
Hear our prayer

As for you Lord God
Come again to cold hearts - Weary bodies - Confused minds
To fill with spirit - And renew with life

That service will be true
Love be real
And glory be to Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Now and always in the words that you taught us to pray
Amen

Hymn: *"May the God of Hope Go With Us"*

- 1 May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.
Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.
- 2 May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed. R

Commissioning and Benediction

Postlude

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November bulletins are sponsored by: Audrey Gutz & family in loving memory of Ritchie Gutz. And by: Eleanor McLaughlin in loving memory of Marvin McLaughlin and Harold & Marjorie Dougherty.

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CD of Sunday's Service available—contact Jean at 613-582-3597.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gifts with Vision catalogues are in. There is one at the back of each church and you can order online! **gifts with vision.ca**

Although food donations are not being accepted at this time, let us continue to think of others that are less fortunate through our financial donations.

Service Times

Oct thru December Trinity ~ @ 9:30 a.m., St. Andrew's @ 11 pm.

Prayer List: Let us keep the following people in our prayers for healing at this time.

Paige Atherton, Mackay family, Rob Marson, Murray Anderson, Bernie Lemke, Leanne Caniff, Audrey Gutz, Lorna Stevenson, Ruby Bell, Freda Kinnear, Mervin Kinnear, Elaine Moore, Lola Byce, Bill Douma, Keith Johnson, Nora Bennett,

Please contact me if there is someone that you would like to add to our list for special prayers or you feel is in need of a pastoral care visit. I would request that you please ask the person's permission before submitting their name to be put in the bulletin. *Rev. Kevin*

Trinity

Nov. 29th ~ 'Hanging of the Greens' and 'White Gift' Sunday. Please note that the Cobden Food Bank is accepting groceries or monetary donations.

Anyone wishing to purchase a poinsettia in memory of a loved one for the 'Hanging of the Greens' service please let Betty know. 613-646-2120