

ORDER OF SERVICE
Sunday August 23, 2020
St. Paul's United Church, Bowmanville ON

Welcome/ Land Acknowledgement

Whether this is your first time worshipping with us or this is a congregation you call your community of faith, your home, know that you are welcome here for we at St Paul's extend God's love to all* people who desire justice, spiritual connection, community and personal growth, rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Here at St. Paul's, "We envision a world where ALL* people know that they are God's beloved children who are inherently valued and called to live into their unique purpose and calling in life."

As we gather this morning, we do so acknowledging that we are in territory covered by the Williams Treaty and the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We offer our gratitude to The First Nations people for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations. May we honour those teachings as we strive for respectful partnerships with all the peoples of this province and country in our search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour of this beautiful land together.

Celebrations

Lighting the Christ Candle

We light a candle,
We watch the flickering light and we imagine the warmth it creates.
But without the spark that ignites,
there will be no flame.
Without the wax,
the source of power,
the wick will not burn.
Without the flame,
there will be no warmth, no light.
And so with us.
Christ is the catalyst that ignites us,
and the fuel that sustains us.
As we watch the flickering flame may we experience Christ
entering our lives,

empowering us to carry the Christ flame in our hearts,
to be the light of love,
in this world.

Call to Worship

(inspired by Mark 8:29 and Matthew 16:15)

In the name of the Jesus the Christ
the bread breaker
the light gatherer
cross carrier
welcome

May the peace of Jesus the Christ
the peace maker
and the temple disturber
friend of the sinner
and companion on the road
be with us all

Let us draw close to Jesus the Christ
the saviour
the healer
the teacher
and worship him

and ask ourselves
who do we say he is?

~ inspired by Mark 8:29 and posted on Spill the Beans. <http://www.spillbeans.org.uk/>

Hymn: VU331 "The Church's One Foundation"

1 The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation

by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

2 Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.

3 'Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war
she waits the consummation
of peace for evermore;
till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blessed,
and the great Church victorious
shall be the Church at rest.

4 Yet she on earth hath union
with God, the Three in one,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee.

Opening Prayer/ Lord's Prayer

We thank you, O God, our Comforter, that we are not alone. You watch over us, guide us, and lead us in Your righteous pathways. When we stumble and fall, you lift us up and gently place us on that pathway again. When we doubt, you surround us with your mercy and peace, reassuring us of your presence through the love of others and of Jesus the Christ. Keep our hearts and minds open and ready to serve you, for we pray these

things in Jesus' name as we join our voices together saying Our Creator, Our Mother and 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. Lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. AMEN.

Theme Conversation: Laura

Hymn VU 120 "O Jesus I Have Promised"

1 O Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
be thou forever near me,
my Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
if thou art by my side,
nor wander from the pathway
if thou wilt be my guide.

2 O Jesus, thou hast promised
to all who follow thee,
that where thou art in glory
there shall thy servant be;
and, Jesus, I have promised
to serve thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow,
my Master and my Friend.

3 O let me feel thee near me!
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me,
around me and within;
but Jesus, draw thou nearer,
and shield my soul from sin.

4 O let me hear thee speaking
in accents clear and still,

above the storms of passion,
the murmurs of self will.
O speak to reassure me,
to hasten or control;
O speak and make me listen,
thou guardian of my soul.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:13-20 (The Message)

13 When Jesus arrived in the villages of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “What are people saying about who the Son of Man is?”

14 They replied, “Some think he is John the Baptizer, some say Elijah, some Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

15 He pressed them, “And how about you? Who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter said, “You’re the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17-18 Jesus came back, “God bless you, Simon, son of Jonah! You didn’t get that answer out of books or from teachers. My Father in heaven, God himself, let you in on this secret of who I really am. And now I’m going to tell you who you are, *really* are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.

19 “And that’s not all. You will have complete and free access to God’s kingdom, keys to open any and every door: no more barriers between heaven and earth, earth and heaven. A yes on earth is yes in heaven. A no on earth is no in heaven.”

20 He swore the disciples to secrecy. He made them promise they would tell no one that he was the Messiah.

Music/Solo: Janet Rice and Derek Marsellus “The Sound of Silence”

"The Sound Of Silence"

Hello, darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams I walked alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone
'Neath the halo of a streetlamp
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light
That split the night
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices never share
No one dared
Disturb the sound of silence

"Fools," said I, "You do not know
Silence like a cancer grows
Hear my words that I might teach you
Take my arms that I might reach you."
But my words like silent raindrops fell
And echoed in the wells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed
To the neon god they made
And the sign flashed out its warning
In the words that it was forming
And the sign said, "The words of the prophets
Are written on the subway walls
And tenement halls
And whispered in the sounds of silence."

Prayer for Understanding

Great Teacher, guide us this day. Shape us and mold us into better people. As we draw near to You, may we understand Your teachings and apply them to our lives. In the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Reflection: “Jesus Is...”

Who do you say I Am? If this question were posed to us by Jesus how might we answer?

How might you answer this question?...

...

...

At various points in my life I would have answered this question differently. As a child he was my best friend... a friend I couldn't see, but a friend, nonetheless. “What a friend we have in Jesus...”

As I became a teenager and young adult Jesus was someone who understood my life in a way that I didn't think anyone else could. Jesus pointed me to God.

And then I became an ordained minister and the depth of who Jesus was, is and will continue to be in my life, has become far more complex...

We live in a time that even a couple of decades ago we could not have imagined. There is soooo much information out there not only about Jesus but about everything.

If we were to walk into a bookstore, look on our computer or smartphone or tablet, we would find more information than we could get our heads around when asking the question, “Who is Jesus?” We would find resources from

theologians, from historians, from archeologists, from sociologists, from novelists, from laypeople, from believers and non-believers and everything in between. The oddest thing for me though is that with all of this writing, the question that Matthew says Jesus asks is a question that is still a daunting one to answer.

“Who do you say that I AM?”

How we answer that question has layers that come from the things we have learned from our families, from our Communities of Faith, from the larger Church, from our society and culture, from TV, movies, books we have read, documentaries we have seen, maybe from lectures we have gone to.

Over our lifetime, throughout our journeys of faith, we have learned so much about Jesus. But if you are like me rather than helping me answer the question with clarity, it often leaves me tripping over all of the images and words that come to mind when I think of Jesus.

“Who do you say that I AM?”

The way in which we answer questions about the identity of Jesus matters because we live in a world where so many of the answers that have already been offered continue to misrepresent the man who lies at the heart of Christianity. These days, what passes for Christianity often stands in direct opposition to the teachings of the man Christians profess to follow.

Pastor Dawn Hutchings says, “The idol worshipped by millions depicts Jesus as a super-hero God, sent to die as a blood sacrifice for sin. This idol has co-opted the story of Jesus the man who steadfastly refused to take up violence against his enemies. Worshippers of this idol seek the companionship of a personal saviour, sacrificed violently for their personal sin, while they turn their backs upon Jesus’ the man’s personal quest for peace through justice for all. Worshippers of this idol follow a saviour who encourages them in their personal quest for happiness in this world and the next. All too often, this personal quest for happiness, results in the

oppression and suffering of others, requiring the followers of this idol to embrace violence.”

“Who do you say that I AM?” The way in which we answer this question informs how we live in the world.

“Who do you say that I AM?” – a human, a seeker of justice committed to non-violent resistance to oppressive systems, willing to give everything to achieve peace, peace for all. A teacher offering insights into a way of being in the world that embodies LOVE.

OR

...a super-human, blood-sacrifice, who demands obedience and conviction to a carefully crafted story designed to ensure that your tribe wins the battle to create a new world order, where your tribe wins not only in this life but in the next.

“Who do you say that I AM?”

You may have struggled, like I have in getting my head around the image of Jesus as some sort of sacrificial lamb who died to save us from our sins. The idea of worshipping any God that would demand a blood sacrifice is repulsive to most 21st century thinkers. When it comes to those of us who live in the 21st century who are doing our best to Love God with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our minds, our minds cannot and must not be left out of the equation! The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus must be allowed to speak to us in ways that make sense. We must encounter Jesus with all our hearts, souls and minds! Only, when we engage our minds can we ever hope to answer questions about who Jesus is and was. Each of us must struggle to answer the question posed by Jesus in the anonymous gospel story-tellers story: “Who do you say that I AM?”

We need to have the courage to face the realities that we have discovered even if those realities fly in the face of centuries of church teachings! In the

words of the Apostle Paul: “If you are a teacher, use your gift for teaching. If you are good at preaching, then preach boldly.” So, as a teacher and a preacher my role in the Body of Christ, is to spend time with the questions about Jesus identity not to provide you with “the” answer, but hopefully to help you find your own answers and I do mean answers because there isn’t only one answer but rather answers.

Jesus was, is, and ever more shall be a different character in the lives of different people. There will always be some who are content to settle for Jesus as one who sacrifices himself so that they can rest easy. But for those who are willing to follow Jesus into the complexity of faith and life, Jesus will always be out there on the boundaries calling for new and more expansive understanding of the LOVE that Jesus embodied in life. Jesus’ life and death bear witness to the LOVE that we call God in ways that most of us are only beginning to understand. Jesus gave new expression to that LOVE that continues to challenge each and every one of us to be that LOVE.

And this living breathing Jesus, grew up within Judaism. This Jesus travelled through the towns and villages of first century Palestine sparking a revolution. He was intentionally seeking God’s world order, God’s way of being, God’s values and priorities.

“Who do you say that I AM?”

Jesus is Redeemer, Christ, Friend, Living Word.

In The Song of Faith we confess that,

In Jesus we encounter God.

We sing of Jesus,
a Jew,
born to a woman in poverty

in a time of social upheaval
and political oppression.
He knew human joy and sorrow.
So filled with the Holy Spirit was he
that in him people experienced the presence of God among them.
We sing praise to God incarnate.

Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—
a commonwealth not of domination
but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.
He healed the sick and fed the hungry.
He forgave sins and freed those held captive
by all manner of demonic powers.
He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.
He preached and practised unconditional love—
love of God, love of neighbour,
love of friend, love of enemy—
and he commanded his followers to love one another
as he had loved them.

Because his witness to love was threatening,
those exercising power sought to silence Jesus.
He suffered abandonment and betrayal,
state-sanctioned torture and execution.
He was crucified.

But death was not the last word.
God raised Jesus from death,
turning sorrow into joy,
despair into hope.
We sing of Jesus raised from the dead.
We sing hallelujah.

By becoming flesh in Jesus,
God makes all things new.
In Jesus' life, teaching, and self-offering,
God empowers us to live in love.
In Jesus' crucifixion,
God bears the sin, grief, and suffering of the world.
In Jesus' resurrection,

God overcomes death.
Nothing separates us from the love of God.

The Risen Christ lives today,
present to us and the source of our hope.
In response to who Jesus was
and to all he did and taught,
to his life, death, and resurrection,
and to his continuing presence with us through the Spirit,
we celebrate him as
the Word made flesh,
the one in whom God and humanity are perfectly joined,
the transformation of our lives,
the Christ.

“Who do you say that I AM?”

Where two or three are gathered in my name
I AM there in their midst.”

I AM IS in our midst.

I AM WHO AM

IS

in our midst.

The experience of the I AM
burned so brightly in Jesus

May that flame burn brightly
in, with, through, beyond us.

Together, as members of the Body of Christ, let us continue to love God
with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds.” Therein lies
our first clues: Let us “LOVE God, for LOVE is the key to understanding the
identity of Jesus.

Hymn: VU651 “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah”

1 Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy pow'rful hand;
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more;
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through;
Strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield;
Strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me through the swelling current,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee;
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.

Invitation to Offering

In gratitude for all that you have done for us and given to us, we return a portion of these gifts that they may be used in service to others. Let us receive our morning offering.

Offering Prayer

Generous God who always gives to each one of us the best, we thank you for this opportunity to share from our abundance. Bless these gifts, offered through the ministries and mission of this church. In Jesus' name, we pray.
AMEN.

Prayers of the People

We praise you, God, in your hiddenness and in your revelation, in your intimacy with us and your greatness beyond us. We are grateful that you are our Father and Mother and gather us in as your family, whose home we find in you. We thank you that you create in us a sanctuary for your Spirit, and we pray that you dwell within us always, that we may be instruments of your love.

We pray for those who feel excluded from your love, and we ask your forgiveness for our own prejudices that push people away from us and from your church. We pray for those in special need of the community of faith holding them up at this time, whether due to illness, grief, unemployment, homelessness, imprisonment, needing to leave their homeland, or a loss of meaning and direction.

We pray for those on the inside of your church family. Teach us to honour one another, to encourage one another's gifts, to celebrate one another's joys and bear one another's burdens. Protect us from divisiveness and disunity.

We pray for people of other faiths, that the world makes space to respect different religious paths, all of which lead to you as our common Source of Life and Love.

We pray for places of violence, that you would end the turmoil, increase trust and harmony, and bring soon the day of peace.

We pray that you would protect and strengthen firefighters as they seek to contain massive forest fires.

We pray that you would empower first responders, all those who work in our hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes, group homes, for doctors and nurses as they continue to care for our physical health.

We pray for teachers and parents and students as we move closer to the beginning of the school year, a year where many difficult decisions are needing to be made.

We pray for the earth—the only dwelling place for millions of your creatures, flowers and trees, animals of many species, rocks and soil, brooks and oceans—that you will help humanity protect and preserve the beauty and resources of creation for future generations.

We pray for ourselves this day that you may respond to our needs, that others may know of your love, your justice, your peace in and through our lives.

We bring all the prayers of our hearts and mind to you this day.

In the name of Jesus, the Christ we pray.

Amen.

Benediction

The world awaits the love and gifts we have to offer. May we go forth in joy and peace to be God's witnesses this day and all our days. AMEN

Shalom

Shalom to you my friend

Shalom until we meet again

The word "shalom" means peace, hello and good-bye

so sing shalom, shalom

Shalom to you my friend

Shalom until we meet again

The word "shalom" means peace, hello and good-bye

so sing shalom, shalom

When we join our hands across the lands

we'll hear neighbours and brothers, old friends and other

singing shalom to you my friend,

shalom until we meet again.

Shalom to you my friend

Shalom until we meet again

The word "shalom" means peace, hello and good-bye

so sing shalom, shalom

so sing shalom, shalom