



## Kensington Presbyterian Church



### On This Rock

August 23, 2020

Welcome, during these times of physical isolation we are putting out these worship services that you can do at home. This doesn't mean you have to do them alone. You can invite those who live with you, or connect with others through the phone or computer, or even in small groups outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or the office [info@Kensingtonchurch.ca](mailto:info@Kensingtonchurch.ca) (as Rev Peter is away from Aug 4-24).

### Announcements

**Worship Live:** You can join us live over the internet - Sunday's at 10:30.

If you would like to join us, please contact the office for details. [info@Kensingtonchurch.ca](mailto:info@Kensingtonchurch.ca)

**Re-opening the Church:** After considering recommendations from the government and the Presbyterian national office, Session is looking forward to resuming worship in the building Sept 13<sup>th</sup> - with various precautions, such as cleaning of the building and physical distancing.

**Visiting:** In the mean time, if you would like to talk or have a physical distance visit (we can bring a chair and sit at the end of the sidewalk or outside your window), please contact your elder or your elder.

**Talk, Walk and Pray with the Moderator:** The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada is inviting you to join her for talks with people across the country, walking, and in prayer. See her invitation the talks, and prayer list here: <https://>

[presbyterian.ca/gao/moderator/](https://presbyterian.ca/gao/moderator/)

Please continue to check out the website <https://kensingtonchurch.ca/> or facebook <https://www.facebook.com/KensingtonChurchNDG/>

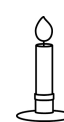
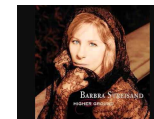
### Contacts

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### Approaching God

Prelude:



### lighting the candle

Jésus Chris est la lumière du monde.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Call to worship (from Psalm 67)

L: We give you thanks, O Lord, with all our hearts  
P: **for your faithful love ensures forever.**

L: We sing your praise, O Lord, with all our might  
P: **for your promises speak of your goodness to all the earth.**  
L: We place our trust in you, O Lord,  
with full confidence  
P: **for your salvation continues from generation to generation.**  
All: **And so we come to worship you,  
O Lord, and lift up our hearts in praise.**

### Prayer of Approach


Eternal God, you are the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and yet you come to us afresh each new day. You breathe new life into what has grown tired and discouraged. You offer healing for what is broken and worn. You restore hope for what seems impossible. You are the source of life and love for us and all your creatures, And so we worship you as Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, one God, now and always. Amen.

### Unison Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God, we confess that we have strayed from your purposes. You set a path for us to follow, but we conform to the ways of this world. You offer us your transforming love, but we cling to familiar patterns and habits. You give each of us gifts to use for the work of your kingdom, but we wait for others to do what needs doing. Forgive us for taking the easy way out and failing to serve you with eager hearts.**

### Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ – and Christ died for us. Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God's generous grace. So let us make a fresh start today!

 Lord's Prayer (feel free to use another version/translation)  
As we turn towards God, we pray the prayer Jesus gave us.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

🎵 Hymn 240: "Rock of ages, cleft for me"

### Listening to God

 Intro to the readings

- We will continue to journey with Jesus through the Gospel of Matthew chapter 16, to the region of Caesarea Philippi, where Peter proclaimed that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God.



Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible, or click on the name to be taken to an online version (NRSV).

[Isaiah 51: 1-6](#)

[Matthew 16: 13-20](#)

## Prayer

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

## Message: On This Rock

It really was a blessing. I am referring to my trip to Israel last year. Not only was it a dream come true, it has broaden and deepen my own faith, my appreciation of the Bible. I particularly love diving into the geography of the region, and finding new insights in the Scripture. So in today's passage of Matthew 16, the reference to the district of Caesarea Philippi perked my interest, I was there, I took pictures, and learned new things.

The area is located at the foot of Mt. Hermon, north of Galilee, in the land originally allotted to the tribe of Dan. It is a beautiful region, lush, green, and on the main source of the river Jordan, which flows into the lake of Galilee, through the Jordan valley, passing Jericho and into the Dead Sea. One could argue that river Jordan was (and still is) the main source of water that gives life to Israel, in the land that was often referred to in the Old Testament as 'from Dan to Beersheba'. If one was to walk and follow that water source upstream, back to its origin, one would inevitably arrive at a grotto that is seemingly carved out of a giant rock at the foot of Mt. Hermon. That grotto, that whole area in the time of Jesus was called Caesarea Philippi.

Of course, it wasn't always called that. The name of that region seemed to follow whatever god was worshipped, and whatever temple was built there at the time. In the Old Testament, it was called Baal-gad, after the Canaanite thunder god Baal. The Greeks later substituted their god Pan, god of the wild, shepherds and flocks. A shrine was built into the rock, and the town took the name Paneas. Herod the Great built a marble temple to Augustus Caesar, who had given him the town. It was Philip the tetrarch who later renamed the town Caesarea in the emperor's honour. The addition of 'Philippi' was to distinguish it from the coastal city of Caesarea on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

Archeological dig of the area revealed a number of temples built in and around the original grotto. When Jesus set foot on the town near the grotto, some two thousands years ago, no less than 7 shrines were in existence, worshipping 5 distinct deities. That must have been a magnificent, amusing, and perhaps confusing sight to behold.

It was in that context, Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13)

Notice the third-person address of the 'Son of Man'? There is considerable debates among Biblical scholars on the identity of this 'Son of Man'. In the Old Testament, the term was used by God to address the prophet Ezekiel. Furthermore, in the Book of Daniel, chapter 7, Son of Man was seen in a vision, as an apocalyptic figure that shall be

given dominion and glory and kingship by the Ancient One, an everlasting dominion that shall never pass away.

Certainly, by the time when the New Testament was canonized, that is organized and declared as Scripture by the community of faith, Son of Man was understood by Christians as Jesus referring to himself. However, this self-identification most likely was not understood by the disciples nor the Jewish people.

So when Jesus asked, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” It really was a vague question, soliciting general sentiment on a vague saviour figure to come. Sort of the modern equivalent of logging onto Twitter or Facebook, to check on the latest celebrity news.

To this vague question, the disciples gave an even more vague reply, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Kind of like throwing multiple darts at the same time, hoping one would land on the bullseye. Missed, missed, missed, and missed.

It was at that point, Jesus pushed the disciples and made his intention crystal clear, “But who do you say that I am?” Compelling the disciples to make a personal declaration on what they truly believe Jesus to be. To this question, Peter, oh once again Peter, jumping out of the boat without much thought. Peter declared, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.”

My mother loves to tell stories. Family stories, stories of how she and eventually the rest of the families came to the Christian faith. In one of the more dramatic and memorable recounting, she described how my father declared himself to be a Christian while preparing for the funeral of my grandfather.

My grandfather was an immensely wealthy man, who had two sets of families. His first wife (my grandmother), produced two sons and four daughters, then passed away during the last childbirth. My grandfather soon remarried, and the second wife also produced a number of offsprings (which to be honest I have lost count). So when my grandfather died of a heart attack at a relatively young age unexpectedly, he did not leave a proper will. Sure enough, ugliness soon emerged.

My father who is the eldest son of the first family, according to tradition, was in charge of funeral arrangement. However, the second wife refused to release the deceased body of my grandfather, unless the first family renounces all claims to his wealth. In grief and desperation, my father, agreed to that outrageous demand, provided that my grandfather be given a Christian burial. Confusion soon erupted among the siblings and relatives of the first family — my father had no right to give up that wealth?...who would provide for his younger siblings?...my grandfather had never professed the Christian faith...heck, not even my father was a baptized Christian at that time. You see, it was mom who was baptized and very much active in church. Dad had consistently and actively resisted the Christian faith up until that point, yet the Spirit of God was already at work in him.

So, facing objections from his own siblings and other close relatives, Dad declared himself to be a follower of Christ, vowed to support for all his siblings, and trusted that ultimately God will provide. Out of honouring his own father in death, Dad gave up wealth and chose faith. Flesh and blood did not do that, God did. The same way that God revealed to Peter who Jesus is, prompted Peter to make the declaration, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus, seeing a glimpse of how God was already at work in Peter, declared in verse 18, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”

On this rock! Contrasting that with the seven temples and shrines, built over the grotto at the foot of Mt. Hermon, worshipping five different and all worthless deities, Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour, the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of the living God, is building his Church on the rock of Peter, his closet disciple, his friend. Not only did Jesus changed Peter’s name, from Simon to the Rock, he changed Peter’s identity. On the shore of Galilee, Jesus first called Simon the fisherman to follow, now Jesus ordained Peter the Rock as the foundation that which Jesus is building his Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. Hallelujah! Amen!

I sometimes look back at that point when my father made that declaration, the choice he made, and I can see how God has been good to my dad’s family. Many of his siblings and offsprings had come to accept the Christian faith, all of them received good educations, formed their own families, and went on to live not wealthy but prosperous and blessed lives.

Contrasting that to my grandfather’s second family, which chose wealth in a most cruel and unscrupulous way. Theirs was a tale of subsequent in-fighting, corruption, wasted wealth and wasted lives. Almost every time we hear stories out of those distant relatives, we could only shake our heads.

Every time when I struggle with my own faith, the story of my faith heritage reminds me that God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good. I have no doubt that many of you would have, in not similar, but equally compelling faith stories to tell.

Today’s story of Peter’s ‘ordination’ as the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ, should serve as a reminder of our collective faith heritage. As the congregation of Kensington look forward to the reopening of its sanctuary in September, I know there is much uncertainty and apprehension.

Kensington Presbyterian Church in the midst of COVID-19, is really a shadow of its former self. Gone were the days of thousand-seat sanctuary, gone were the days of Sunday attendance filled to the brim, gone were the days when the congregation hosted the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, gone were the days when Kensington’s choir had singers and budget that rivalled that of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul.

Yet, the story of this congregation should not be traced only to that of the 60’s or 70’s or 80’s. We are the heirs that could be traced back to the Reformation, to the early Church, to the Apostles, to Peter, to Christ Jesus, and to the Ancient of Days. The same authority that Jesus bestowed

on Peter, is with us today — the keys of the kingdom of heaven — so whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. The authority to judge and the authority to forgive, the call to stand for justice and the call to show compassion.

I am reminded that congregation, in the not so distant past, had changed its name. From K.C.K.F. Presbyterian Church — Kensington Crescent Knox and First — a name that reflected its history of amalgamation, to that of Kensington Presbyterian Church, a name that is taken from its geographical location, but truly reflects the congregation's commitment to the local community in and around the Kensington street, in the middle of Notre Dame de Grace. This name change is a reminder to us, to move away from the inward focus of the congregation, to the outward focus of the community. When we hold on to our faith, as a local expression of the universal Church, not COVID-19, not even the gates of Hades shall prevail against us.

Thanks be to God.  
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

A Musical Moment



Responding to God

Offering


Financially, we have set up a donation option on **our website**.

Just click the '[Donate Now](#)' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow. You can now donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is [Kensington Presbyterian Church](#) and the e-mail address is [info@kensingtonchurch.ca](mailto:info@kensingtonchurch.ca).

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (**PAR**) are also good options.

Anthem:



 Prayers of the people

Note: Those taking part in the Sunday service will have the opportunity to name specific concerns they would like to be included in this prayer.

🎵 Hymn 635: "Brother, sister, let me serve you"

Sending & Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Ghost,  
be with you all. Amen.

Que la grâce du Seigneur Jésus-Christ,  
l'amour de Dieu  
et la communion du Saint-Esprit  
soient avec vous tous. Amen.

postlude:

