

Kensington Presbyterian Church

Growing in Faith and Sharing God's Love since 1786

Honouring God's Gifts

August 27, 2023

Welcome to worship! We offer a variety of ways for people to gather. We welcome everyone to worship in person (with singing!), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this paper/digital outline. No matter how you worship, you are not alone! You are always welcome to be part of our community of faith, and you are also welcome to invite others to join you or to connect with the community!

If you have prayer requests, suggestions to add something new, or you just want to talk, you can always reach out to your elder or if you have a pastoral care emergency, you can contact the office and they will put you in touch with local ministers until Rev. Peter returns to the office and settles back into his routine.



Alexander Plant
For Kensington Presbyterian Church

Announcements

Jesus & Java: We wish to thank everyone that came out to Jesus & Java with Alex Plant while he was filling in for Rev. Peter. Jesus & Java will continue as previously scheduled. The next Jesus & Java will take place on Thursday, August 31st at 3:30 P.M. Join us as we enjoy a time of fellowship and discussion! We will meet at Beetz Café located at 5914 Sherbrooke St. West.

Zoom Prayer Group and Friday Film & Food: The Zoom Prayer Group will resume in September and the Friday Film & Food will be on pause until plans are solidified. Please stay tuned for further details in the coming weeks.

New Hope Boutique: New Hope's Boutique is open on Monday and Wednesday from 10 A.M to Noon. Feel free to drop by and see what they have to offer! If you wish to contribute to the boutique, please let New Hope know!

Contacts

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Approaching God

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Christ est la lumière du monde.
Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Call to Worship

We give thanks to the Lord with all our hearts,
for God's faithful love endures forever.
We sing praises to the Lord, with all our strength,
for God's promises brings compassion to all the earth.
We place our trust in in God with full confidence,
and so we come to worship with hearts full of praise.

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (321)

Prayer of Approach

Eternal God, you are ever present with us through all times and places, yet in that consistency, you come to us afresh each new day. You offer new life into what has grown tired and discouraged. You bring healing to what is worn or broken. You restore hope when things seem impossible. And so we worship you, Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, offering our prayers and praise to you. **Merciful God, while we give you praise for your hand in our lives, we confess that we sometimes stray from your purpose.**

Alexander Plant
For Kensington Presbyterian Church

You set a path for us to follow, but we cower in fear to the judgements of this world. 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 renew in us the eagerness and energy to serve. Inspire in us an active pursuit of your Gospel, as we sing together the prayer that your son Jesus Christ taught his disciples...

The Lord's Prayer

(Please use a version you are comfortable with)

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 Amen

Assurance of Pardon

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

Listening to God

Children's Time

Did you know that you have talents and abilities? To some of us, it may be quite obvious. We have a talented pianist, a capable technician, some of us have gifts in organizing things or inspiring people to help out in worship or in church events. But maybe you're thinking to yourself that you don't have any special gifts. What if I told you that you do indeed have special gifts, even if you don't realize it yet? Did you know that showing up to something is a gift? Sounds a bit crazy, but when we allow ourselves to be present at an event, we show our commitment to supporting the work of the church, even if there isn't a tangible contribution to the event, adding to the presence of an event shows life and activity. Did you also know that those on our online community are also a gift? They remind us that Kensington is not just the people gathered in the four walls of this room, but rather we are a community of faith that reaches out to many people in many different places, and their presence matters as we work to further show God's compassion to his people.

Dear Jesus, we give you thanks for the gifts you freely give us. Inspire us to use those gifts to help others and the work of your church in the community. Amen.

Hymn: Seek ye first (625)

Prayer for Illumination

Source of all wisdom and understanding, among so many competing voices, let us hear your word for our times. Send your Holy Spirit to help us discern your will and follow the path Jesus sets for us as your Living Word. Amen.

Intro to the Readings

Our reading from Isaiah is a reminder that God's righteousness and his salvation is for all time, and that our dedication to him is also for all time. The things that we have a tendency to cling onto, earthly and mortal things, are small and insignificant to the glory of God's righteousness.

Our reading from Romans takes Isaiah further, reminding us that God's path is above the earthly promises that surround us, and that God equips us to go out into the world and use those gifts to serve others and to proclaim the Gospel by living out its words rather than simply meditating on and repeating those words.

Readings

Isaiah 51:1, 6-8

Romans 12:1-8

Sermon: Honouring God's Gifts

One of the best parts of having a community of faith is the social connections we have with one another. It is the essence of what it means to be in communion with God and with one another, to share ourselves and our spiritual lives with one another. I am reminded of the importance of a healthy community where members are open with one another. Too often we see and hear stories of isolation and bullying in our world. The pandemic brought out many of our worst fears, becoming permanently isolated from the routines and familiar faces we became accustomed to. But it also provided us with a perspective that we lacked for generations.

The world we live in is a fascinating yet complex space that we all inhabit together. Communities form in the spaces that we live in, and communities of faith grow within those spaces. Today's passage in Romans talks about what it means to be a part of a community of faith. We are called to be active in our community, not simply to resolve ourselves to stillness and apathy.

The passage starts by calling us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. Of course, the scriptures aren't telling us to literally sacrifice ourselves, but rather we are called to offer ourselves by sacrificing our comfort and our positions of authority or self-defined superiority to please God, not in the sense of "Oh, if I do good things then God will like me". Instead, it's for the benefit of the community that God

sees in action amongst his creation. We are called to work in the community, to interact with those around us.

The scriptures tell us to not conform to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. We are encouraged to stand out in the world and take a proactive approach to improving ourselves and those around us through communal growth and pastorally caring for one another. It does not say reject the world or condemn the world, for we live in the world and we are a part of it, we operate ourselves within it, and we serve those who live in the world under the hand of God who made the world.

We are not called to be judgemental or standoffish to those around us. Far too often I see people forming social cliques and excluding people from forming meaningful relationships, preventing gifts and insights from being shared. Things that are sadly commonplace in high schools are also commonplace in many churches in North America. Whether parishioners are judgemental towards new people or play favourites. I've known ministers who had clear favourites, and one of the key points I learned in seminary is that a minister does ministry for all people, not just a select few. The same rule applies to members of faith communities, and frankly any part of society. God calls us to enter into a covenant with him, a covenant that is both personal and communal.

But when we stray from the communal and exclude people based on superficial criteria, we have to ask

ourselves, what is wrong with this picture? The scriptures tell us that we ought not to think of ourselves more highly than we should, instead use sober judgement in accordance with the faith that God has given to us. This superiority complex applies to everyone, both people in positions of leadership and those who hold responsibility and even those who are first-time visitors to a community. It is so important for everyone in the community to put aside their ego and actually put proactive effort into upholding our spiritual faith.

The church is made up of many people. Some people are in positions of leadership, called to make the decisions necessary to facilitate the work of the church. Other people are the volunteers who work to ensure the work of the church physically gets done. Some are attenders, helping to support the work of the church by providing a physical presence to boost morale and support members through socializing and bonding with other members.

Those who are first-time visitors or occasional worshippers also have a role in the community. They are a reminder to us of our calling as a community of faith to not just worship God through prayer and singing and listening to the preacher talk for 20 minutes. Instead, we worship God through living out the Gospel in a practical and loving way. When we greet people, whether newcomers or familiar faces, we are actively growing both our own faith through the establishment of new or recognized

relationships and the life of the community of faith that we are a part of.

Jesus did not simply preach the Gospel to the crowds, he went everywhere and actively ministered to people. He actively fed the poor, actively healed the sick, actively socialized and visited those who were seen as outcasts. In every community, there are those who feel like they are outcasts in their everyday lives, those with small social circles or those who don't have the connections that they are looking for. When we neglect those whom we may not see or hear, it becomes extremely damaging to those around us, and sometimes we don't recognize it.

When I was doing a long-term pulpit supply back in my very first year of seminary, there was a member of the congregation that felt neglected and I unintentionally neglected them in my pastoral attention to the congregation. They shared with another member that they almost left the congregation entirely if it had not been for me sitting next to them during a luncheon. I had not purposely intended to sit next to that person, I just so happened to pick that seat that was next to them and I casually socialized with those around me, including that person. It was not until the parishioner told me what they were feeling that I realized that I was causing huge damage to that person without even realizing it.

So when we gather together as a community, always remember that relationships held within the community

aren't the same as those that you regularly interact with. Jesus had his disciples, his chosen 12, but he did not focus his attention solely on them. Rather the opposite, Jesus made a point to walk among the crowds and to not send people away, but rather allowing them to walk beside him and to form a relationship with them. So too must we allow ourselves to socialize with everyone in our communities of faith, not just those we so happen to relate to better.

We as members of the body of Christ do not share the same function as everyone else. So too must we share ourselves not just with the same people, but with everyone. When we share ourselves with others, God's work is facilitated through our actions. When we sit next to someone we don't know or when we share moments of fellowship with strangers, it fosters compassion and kindness toward other people. God gives us abilities to use in the world we live in. Each member here has gifts, talents, abilities, and capabilities that can be used to bring forth a positive change. We must allow those gifts to manifest themselves for the greater growth of Christ's Gospel.

Those of us in leadership positions must lead. Lead by example, proactively seeking opportunities to show people the Gospel of Jesus Christ by feeding the hungry, healing the sick, visiting the imprisoned, not just in the literal sense, but in the spiritual sense. When people are lonely or isolated, when people are being ignored or mistreated, take up the mantle of the leadership role you

agreed to hold and allow the Holy Spirit to guide your gifts to repair relationships and build up the community.

Those of us that are the movers and shakers of the church, move and shake. When there is something missing or there is a lacking in the community's vision of Growing in Faith and sharing God's Love, take the steps to inspire the community to engage in growth and development. Mission statements are not just buzzwords or a slogan made to attract new visitors, it's a commitment to apply faith in a beneficial way. So move and shake the church, allow it to grow.

Those of us who are attendees, you are called to attend! Allow yourself to become present in the work of the church. When we support community organizations like New Hope or the Montreal Children's Theatre, join in on the fun! You don't have to necessarily volunteer, although if you feel compelled to do so, then feel free. Simply attending events, carrying the banner of Kensington and being ambassadors of the church can be so beneficial beyond understanding. Simply showing up to events tells people that this church cares about its outreach partners.

When we have members of this church actively attending events both in relation to this church and outside in the community, our visual presence is one of the keys to growing our community of faith. Jesus did not preach from caves or hidden places. He was amongst the crowds of people, being present in people's lives. So too must we be

active not just within the walls of Kensington, but in the community itself. Because when we gather together as a community of faith in the world, making our presence known through supporting initiatives and projects that serve vulnerable people and those in need, that is when the church grows.

And to those who are first-time or occasional visitors, your role is just as important as those who hold church membership. You are our reminder of our mission in the community and you help us to foster new relationships and to help us grow in our spiritual calling as Christians to become more proactive in our faith. So welcome if you are here for the first time or the hundredth time, you have a place here. Because just as the scriptures tell us, we all have different gifts to give to the church. And if you think you don't have any, I challenge you to explore what you have, even if just attending events is your gift.

Let us never forget the commitment we have to one another. Only in Christ's love can we grow as a community of faith together. We have a rich history of ministry in this community, and we have been given the responsibilities of leadership and work to make this community one that serves, encourages, teaches, gives, and shows mercy and compassion in the face of frustration. Thanks be to God for the blessing of this congregation, and may God continue to bless his people with inspired hearts and compassionate actions. Amen.

Responding to God

Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you (635)

FaithTalk

These are some questions for you to discuss with someone (or a group of people). Practice some of these throughout the week, and remember to stretch yourself a little and try something new!

Memories: Think about a time where you were able to serve or help someone using one of your gifts or talents.

Prayer: Reflect on the things that God has given you, and if you are seeking to identify your gifts, pray to God and allow yourself to realize the potential you have to contribute to the community of faith.

Actions: Take proactive action in the work of Kensington and use the gifts and talents you have in a constructive and practical way to grow the community. Offer your perspectives in a committee or team, offer to volunteer during worship or another church event. Reach out to someone new and offer a time of fellowship.

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 also donate through interac e-transfer. Our name is "Kensington Presbyterian Church" and the e-mail address is: info@kensingtonchurch.ca. Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) are also good options.

Prayers of the People

Loving God, you equip your people with gifts to work for your kingdom, bringing justice and peace to every land and community. We thank you for your desire to work through us, even when we don't feel adequate for the task. Help us to recognize your Spirit at work among us even in our insecurities and doubts about ourselves and others. Empower the church to speak words of justice and truth into situations where people are exploited or treated unfairly. Guide us to bring change for good in the world, and bring hope to the hopeless.

In the example of your Son Jesus, O God, you give the gift of serving. With this gift, encourage your servant Church to work with those made vulnerable by structures of power and privilege. Show us how to share the abundance of our community with those who struggle each and every day. Inspire in us hearts to reach out to those who are isolated or bullied away from the community. Turn

us away from judgemental behaviour and bring about a spirit of inclusivity and love.

Through the examples of prophets and apostles, O God, you give the gift of leadership. Call upon the leaders within the Church to build up our ministries and model respectful and meaningful ways of living and loving together. Call up leaders in our nation and neighbourhood to live a life of grace and compassion, attending to the common good and the needs of your people.

We are grateful for all the people in whom we see your gifts at work. Inspire us to add our energy and experience to the care of creation as the loyal followers of Jesus who embodied all your gifts and who calls us to live out his Gospel to all people. This we pray in your most precious name. Amen.

Hymn: Joyful, joyful we adore you (410)

Sending & Benediction

God has equipped each and every one of you to do the work that God desires for his people. Go forth from this place and seek that which offers your generosity, diligence, and cheerfulness in the service of others. And May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and inspire you to work in His Kingdom, this day and always. Amen.