



Kensington Presbyterian Church  
*Growing in faith and sharing God's love*  
*since 1786*

## *Our Father/Mother/Rock/Breath*

*May 11, 2025*

**WELCOME**, we come to you from the un-ceded lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

We're glad this PDF has come to you.<sup>1</sup> If you're using a device, clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site. We are also welcoming people to worship in person on Sundays at 10:30, over Zoom, and on YouTube. Know that you are not alone.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca).



### *Announcements*

**Sunday Singing:** Join Zoé on Sundays at 9:30 to share in the music.

#### **Prayer Groups:**

**Zoom:** Wednesday 6:30 am

**Woman's Prayer Group:** Thursdays 2-3:30 pm at Cathy's house  
 talk to Ines or Cathy for more information

**Bible Study on Acts:** Wednesday 7-8 pm over zoom and in person

**Jesus & Java:** Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton  
 A time for casual discussion about life and God

**Friday's Food & Film Festival** returning in September

**Worship at St. Andrew's Home:** Sundays, 3:30 (less than an hour)

You are welcome to join the Rev. Jessica Gauthier for a time of song, scripture and prayer with the residence.

<sup>1</sup> note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



Mother's Love - Roxana Gonzales

**Drop Box:** Food donations are welcome for the Food Pantry at *Women on the Rise*, and items for children (ex. diapers) for young mothers through Head & Hands.

**Inter-Mission:** Peter will be away on a break similar to a sabbatical until July 21<sup>st</sup>. If you have any pastoral concerns please contact an Elder or the church office.

### *Contacts*

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## *Approaching God*



Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Chris est la lumière du monde.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



Call to worship

Under your wings

You would hide us

**Mothering God**

Under your wings

You would shelter us

**Mothering God**

Under your wings

You would warm us

**Mothering God**

Under your wings

You would nurture us

**Mothering God<sup>2</sup>**

Let us worship God



Hymn: A Mighty Fortress.....pg 10 (315)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB5XvHq8UHK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB5XvHq8UHK)



Prayer of Approach<sup>3</sup>

Loving God,

you father us and mother us

all our days.

Even before we acknowledge you  
you loved us;  
you laboured to bring us to birth,  
new birth,  
and how joyful for you was that birthing.  
In the secret places of our lives  
you nourish us,  
offering us the feeding that we need  
to grow as human beings.

No matter how often we desert you  
you never turn your face away from us.  
and your abiding concern  
is always for our good.

You weep for us,  
you laugh with us,  
you rejoice in our successes  
and are in anguish at our pain.

Yours are the arms  
reaching out to cradle us  
when we collapse in death.


Loving, mothering God,  
strong and tender,  
tried and true,  
we worship you today.

Amen.

<sup>2</sup> *Eggs and ashes* ed. Ruth Burgess. Wild Goose Publ.

<sup>3</sup> by John Harvey.. *Eggs and ashes* ed. Ruth Burgess. Wild Goose Publ.

To help us live a good life, Jesus teaches us to pray what is known as the Lord's Prayer. I invite you to join in singing it together.

 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.**



### *Listening to God*

#### Children's Time

God is pretty hard to imagine, but people are always trying. It's part of getting to know God - imagining ways to describe God.

God is strong... like a lion  
& solid/dependable... like a rock  
& invisible... like wind  
& gentle (& life)... like breath  
& helpful... like a servant  
but also has authority... like a king  
& loves us... like a mother and father

And the Bible has many more images/words to describe God:

ex. eagle, lamb, dove,  
fortress, Alpha & Omega, Word (*verb*),  
bread, water, Shepherd, light,

There may be some you like more than others, that's okay. It's also good to remember the others - because they also help us recognize God.



Prayer:

*Dear Jesus, help us to remember what you're like,  
and keep learning about you.*

Amen.



♪ Hymn: This is my Father's world.....pg 11 (328)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63r2UzN4VMc>

🧘 Prayer for Illumination

Lord, open our hearts and minds  
through the power of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may know you more and more.  
Amen.

✨ Sermon: Our Father/Mother/Rock/Breath  
Today's readings will come throughout the sermon.

*Dear Lord, please bless these words  
and the meditations of our hearts. Amen.*

Trying to define the divine is a good thing. It's impossible, but coming up with ways to relate to God helps us to know God - and this is good. Having all these images listed, and more, helps us to both see aspects of God and to feel a connection. We'll spend more time with that in a bit.

First I want to touch on some of the negative aspects of using images to try and describe God.

A basic one we've already covered: that of not considering what the image represents, such as saying Jesus is the Good Shepherd and leaving it at that. I suspect that many of us find the shepherd image of Jesus comforting because it brings back warm feelings from Sunday School, calm/reassuring art, and Psalm 23. This is good and shows the power of images, but we should also think about what the image means (like we did with the children). Let's finish off the list by matching characteristics with the images:

ex. eagle: powerful,  
lamb: will suffer for us (sacrificial lamb),  
dove: free, pure  
fortress: solid protection,  
breath: gentle and life giving,  
Alpha & Omega: always there)  
Word: active (*verb* more accurate),  
bread: nourishment),  
water: life giving, powerful, hard to hold,  
shepherd: protection and care  
light: revealing - a path for life, and for self improvement,  
...

This is neither an exclusive list of images, nor of their meanings, but it's a good start.



Good Shepherd - J Dupre


So, one danger is not thinking through the metaphor. Another is getting the metaphor backwards. We can think of God as like a shepherd rather than a shepherd as being like God. This is seen

more often when talking about God as 'Our Father'. It is easy to think of God as being like our father. For some of us that is a blessing, but for others their father was the source of hurt. Speaking as a father, none are perfect. It is important to remember that God isn't like our fathers, but that our fathers, at their best, are like God. At their best, our fathers help us see what God is like.

The father image is one that resonated with people through the centuries, reinforced by the Lord's Prayer starting with "Our Father." This is good, but has been limiting. When any metaphor or title for God becomes an unthinking norm then it both loses its power and denies us insight from the other images - such as female images of God. This fixation on one image for God is the last danger I want to highlight.

Thankfully God doesn't like to be put in a box. Sometimes a comment from a friend helps you connect with another image. Sometimes there are larger movements. Feminism has helped the male dominated world recognize that there are wonderful female role models in the Bible beyond Mary - and helped us notice the female images of God in the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

Laura is going to share some of them with us one at a time, giving us space to reflect on the image.

 Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,<sup>5</sup> or click on the name to be taken to an online version.  
[Genesis 1: 26-27](#)

<sup>4</sup> I'm curious how the rise of Christianity in the southern hemisphere is going to remind us of aspects of God that we have forgotten in our 'comfortable' Canadian context where we just expected people to come to church.

<sup>5</sup> If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963  
or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV


This isn't the Adam & Eve story of creation - though even that isn't as male dominated as it has been used.<sup>6</sup> In this creation story, placed first, God creates humans in the divine image, "male and female he created them."

Two important parts of this is for you to know that you are part of the image of God. You are important, and not alone. It takes everyone to make the image of God.

Sadly, throughout history, and still today, some people consider themselves more important and others less so. Gender has often been a dividing line. Thankfully this has improved here, though still needs work.



Our next reading is from Psalm 22. This is the psalm that starts, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" that Jesus quotes on the cross (in Mark & Matthew). Over 31 verses it moves through various feelings, and includes an image of God that is typically female.

 Reading: [Psalm 22](#): 9-11

Life has ups and downs, and that is in Psalm 22 - as is a celebration of good news to be passed down to the generations.

<sup>6</sup> The word for 'rib' that is used to form Eve can also be translated as 'side', suggesting that Adam was divided in half. While both halves are not the same, together they make the whole. Neither need be dominant; both are important/necessary.

What about the part we started with?

God being there at your birth.

Cradling you when you left the womb.

Settling you at your mother's breasts.

God as the midwife who delivered you.

What does this present to us about God?

One that can be tender, but also capable of dealing with unexpected and dangerous situations.

One that was with you in the beginning when it was dark, and helped you into the light.

One that doesn't need to be the star of the show, but serves to enable others.

Our next reading comes through the prophet Isaiah.

 Reading: [Isaiah 49](#): 15-18a




Mary Nursing - Barbara Februar

I've never nursed a child with my body, but I remember holding my newborns. There is much from those years that is

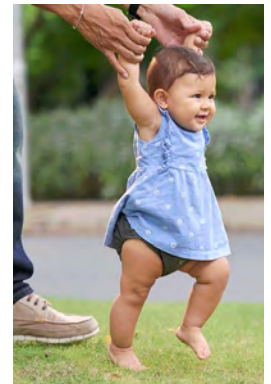
fogged by sleep deprivation, but the feel of cradling them in my arms is still with me. I imagine this is more so for those who give birth and can nurture their children.

This image compares God not to a father, but to the mother. And God's attachment to us is even stronger. As unlikely as a mother can forget their child whom they nurtured, God will not forget us. You are not forgotten.

Our second last reading comes through the prophet Hosea. It refers to Ephraim. Rather than meaning a specific person or tribe, in this case Ephraim means all of Israel.

 Reading: [Hosea 11](#): 1-4

God as the one who lifts them affectionately his cheek. Who bends down to feed them (yes, that is a reference to breastfeeding<sup>7</sup>). One who helps them take their first steps; encouraging, and picking them up when they fall. Nowadays this is done by either, or both, parents. In biblical times it was most likely to have been done by the mother.<sup>8</sup>




This reminds us that God is with us, teaching us the basics of how to move on our journey. But it is more than teaching us to walk though. Have you ever been a part teaching somebody to walk? picking them up when they fall? lifting them to your cheek? These aren't just facts. There are strong emotional connections born in these times. Have you imagined God with those feelings about us? about you? . . .

<sup>7</sup> as an aside, the term 'El Shaddai' (ex. Genesis 35:11) is often translated as 'God Almighty', but Shaddai can mean 'breasts' - so El Shaddai can mean God with breasts.

<sup>8</sup> Without a time machine we can't check, but this would be consistent with what we do know and similar cultures.



Our last reading is a metaphor that shows up repeatedly throughout the Bible, but I've chosen one from Luke. It's from a chapter we missed in our recent Luke series, but the context is that Jesus has just been warned by some Pharisees that it's not safe for him to continue to Jerusalem. He explains that he knows, but must continue to reveal God.

 Reading: [Luke 13](#): 34

The image of the hen gathering the chicks under her wings. The Lord shelters us, but this isn't the image of a fortress. This is a mother and her children. Think of those chicks. Imagine what it would feel like to be one of them. . . because you are.



Motherhood - Ben Austrian


There are many images to help us understand God. None of them are complete, but they can offer glimpses for the mind and connections for our emotions. So please reflect on them, taste them, imagine with them. And today, Mother's Day, I encourage you to feel those aspects of our Lord God, creator of the universe, and mother to each of us.

*To God be all the glory  
Amen.*



## *Responding to God*

♪ Hymn: Mothering God, you gave me birth.....pg. 13 (312)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvO8QTa7API](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvO8QTa7API) (best sped up)

-  FaithTalk: These are some questions for you to discuss with somebody... or many somebodies.  
Do what you feel safe (and practice stretching a little).  
Values: What is your favourite image/description of God? Can you describe why?  
Memories: What is a way(s) that your mother revealed some God-like characteristics?  
Visions: Brainstorm a list of words that describe God and new metaphors. For example: strong like a truck (alternate for lion), or invisible & powerful like gravity (alternate for wind).  
Prayer: ...that we can make time to actively have Sabbath rest.

### Spirit Sightings

One of the ways that the Spirit is working is through opening doors. There are six remote Presbyterian congregations who have not had a regular minister for a long time - though some regularly participate in this program. The national office is going to support a ministry student to be with them for four months this summer.

That's why Hanvit is going to Melita, Manitoba (about an hour and a half south-west Brandon. I also heard this week from Joseph, and he'll be going to Geraldton (about 3 hours north-east of Thunder Bay). While Hanvit has lived in quite a variety of places, this will be very different for Joseph who has always lived in large cities. Please pray for both of them this summer during their time of ministry and reflection.



## Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website**: [kensingtonchurch.ca](http://kensingtonchurch.ca). 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](mailto:info@kensingtonchurch.ca).

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



The Midwife - Loren Entz



## Prayers of the people<sup>9</sup>

This week we will be passing around our prayer diary and having a prayer based on that. You are welcome to create your own prayer based on this...

<sup>9</sup> There are some good prayers for mothers on these sites:  
[fatpastor.me/2015/05/06/mothers-day-litany/](http://fatpastor.me/2015/05/06/mothers-day-litany/)  
[www.messymiddle.com/Beyond-the-surface-of-mothering](http://www.messymiddle.com/Beyond-the-surface-of-mothering)

Thank you Lord for the Bible;

for the images and stories in it.

That you are the King of kings,

the leader and authority above all others.

As such, we pray for the leaders here on earth.

Political: including those recently elected to the Federal

Government, and those leading and advising other governments - especially those experiencing fear, pride & conflict.

Corporate: as they try to navigate the new economic chaos, may they remember more than financial profit.

Church: the new Pope,

and for the leaders here at Kensington.

May we all look to you

Lord of all.

You are also one who cares about us.

You will always reach down to help us  
to cradle us

opening your wings wide to shelter us.

We pray Lord for those in need of your care:

such as those learning to walk,

and where their lives should go;

those who are lost

and need your light to see a way;

those who live with conflict

and need safety;

those who struggle for food and shelter

and need your shepherding to provide

those who need hope

and for you to pick them up

those who are unhealthy in body, mind, or soul

may you be the Great Physician and bring healing.



As sons and daughters of our mothers,  
we pray for them.  
Thank you for when they reflected you,  
and may we forgive them for when they didn't.

And we pray for mothers now,  
as they struggle with challenges.  
May they also have the space to experience joys.

We pray all this in Jesus' name,  
Amen.

♪ Hymn: How firm a foundation.....pg 12 (685)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA4bTqCjLQw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA4bTqCjLQw)

✦ Sending & Benediction (2 Corinthians 13:13)  
Mothering God  
You watch your children grow  
**And send us out.**

Mothering God  
You teach us what is true  
**And send us out.**

Mothering God  
You show us what is just  
**And send us out.**

Mothering God  
You give us what we need  
**And send us out.**

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you Amen.*



## MISSION MOMENT

Sunday, May 11

"I could not get medical help in time because we did not have enough money," says 65-year-old Ruqaiya, who lives in Afghanistan. Ruqaiya's life took a challenging turn ten years ago when she fell on ice, resulting in partial paralysis. Despite her impairment, she helps care for her youngest son, who has a hand impairment, two daughters-in-law, and two young grandchildren while her two oldest sons work as porters in Kabul, struggling to earn enough. Before her injury, Ruqaiya was known for her skill in weaving and was able to earn a decent income. Now unable to weave, she faces significant financial hardship, made worse by the political and economic situation in the country. Relief came when Ruqaiya received cash assistance through a PWS&D-supported project. She purchased essentials like oil, pulses, flour, rice and salt, meeting her family's food needs during the harsh winter.



### DAILY PRAYERS

**Sunday, May 11 (Christian Family Sunday)** We give thanks and pray for our parents who gave us life, and for those who have nurtured us in faith.

**Monday, May 12** We pray for Knox College and the Class of 2025 as they prepare for their convocation ceremony and events on May 14. We pray for a joyful celebration of academic success and an affirmation of a call to serve.

**Tuesday, May 13** We pray for young people joining the staff at Crieff Hills this summer, that their landscaping and work tending the beautiful land there will be safe, productive and meaningful.

**Wednesday, May 14** We pray for the Board of Governors who willingly volunteer their time to give leadership and support in the successful administration of The Presbyterian College, Montreal.

**Thursday, May 15** We pray for congregations in discernment about their future, and for ministers who are leading and guiding them in the discernment process.

**Friday, May 16** We pray for the Every Youth Empowered Project participants in Malawi, who are accessing information about sexual and reproductive health rights with support from PWS&D. May they be empowered with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about their health and futures.

**Saturday, May 17 (International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia)** We pray that communities, elected officials and religious leaders will contribute to the safety and well-being of LGBTQI2+ people in Canada and around the world.

## A mighty fortress is our God

EIN' FESTE BURG 878766667

C /E F G Am D G Am Em F G Am/C

1. A might-y for-tress is our God, a ref-uge nev-er  
2. Did we in our own strength con-fide, our striv-ing would be  
3. And though this world, with e-vil filled, should threat-en to un-  
4. That Word a-bove all earth-ly powers—no thanks to them!—a-

C /E F Dm6 C Em Am 6 G/B Am/C D G F

seeks to work us woe with craft and pow-er great and,  
Je-sus, liv-ing, true. Lord Sab-ba-oth by name, from  
God will sure-ly quell: their rage we can en-dure, for  
goods, all earth-ly love. Earth's pow-ers waste a-way; God's

Dm G7 C /E F G Am D G Am Em F

fail-ing, our help-er sure a-mid the flood of mor-tal  
los-ing, were not a Sav-iour on our side, the One of  
do us, we will not fear, for God has willed the truth to  
bid-ing, en-sures that all God's gifts are ours, through Christ in

F C A/C# Dm A Am Em F C Am Dm G7 C

armed with cru-el hate, on earth has not an e-qual.  
age to age the same, al-read-y wins the bat-tle.  
look! their doom is sure: one lit-tle word will fell them.  
word en-dures al-way, whose reign will last for-ev-er.

G Am Dm G7 C Em D G/B D G C/E

ills pre-vail-ing. For still our an-cient foe yet  
God's own choos-ing. Who is this Sav-iour, who? Christ  
tri-umph through us: the powers of death and hell our  
us re-sid-ing, whose sum-mons rings a-bove all

Words: Psalm 46; paraphrase, Martin Luther (1483–1546), translation, Frederick H. Hedge (1805–1890), alt  
Music: Martin Luther (1483–1546); arrangement: Hans Leo Hassler (1564–1612)

Words: this version, copyright © The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997 Music: public domain

## This is my Father's world

TERRA BEATA 6 6 8 6 D SMD Irregular

Eb /G Bb6 7 Eb (Fm/Ab C7/G) Fm Bb/D Eb  
 1. This is my Fath-er's world, and to my lis-tening  
 2. This is my Mak-er's world; the birds their car-ols  
 3. This is my Sav-iour's world; oh let me not for-

Bb /Ab Eb/G Eb Bb6 Cm G 7 Cm Bb/D  
 ears all na-ture sings, and round me rings the  
 raise; the morn-ing light, the li-ly white, de-  
 get that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God

Eb Cm Eb/G Bb7 Eb Bb/Ab Eb/G Ab Cm Eb/G  
 mu-sic of the spheres. This is my Fath-er's world: I  
 clare their Mak-er's praise. This is my Mak-er's world; God  
 is the Rul-er yet. This is my Sav-iour's world; the

Ab Eb/G Bb/F F7 Bb /Ab Eb/G Eb Bb6 Cm  
 rest me in the thought; of rocks and trees, of  
 shines in all that's fair; in the rus-ling grass, God's  
 bat-tle is not done; Je-sus, who died, shall be

G 7 Cm Bb/D Eb Cm Eb/G Bb7 Eb  
 skies and seas God's hands the won-ders wrought.  
 foot-steps pass; God speaks to me eve-ry-where.  
 sat-is-fied, and earth and heaven be one.

Words: Maltbie D. Babcock (1858–1901); alt Music: English traditional melody;  
arrangement, anonymous

Words: this version, copyright © The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997 Music: public domain



## How firm a foundation

ST. DENIO 11 11 11 11

G C Am D Em G/D D 7 G

1. How firm a foun - da - tion, ye saints of the Lord,  
 2. "Fear not, I am with thee; oh be not dis - mayed!  
 3. "When through the deep wa - ters I call thee to go,  
 4. "When through fi - ery tri - als thy path - way shall lie,  
 5. "The soul that on Je - sus hath leaned for re - pose

C Am D Em G/D D 7 G

is laid for your faith in God's ex - cel - lent word!  
 For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
 the riv - ers of woe shall not thee o - ver - flow,  
 my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be thy sup - ply;  
 I will not— I will not— de - sert to his foes;

D/F# G (/B) G Em G/B D

What more can God say than to you hath been said,  
 I'll strength-en thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand  
 for I will be with thee, thy trou - bles to bless,  
 the flames shall not hurt thee; I on - ly de - sign  
 that soul, though all hell should en - deav - our to shake,

B Em Am D Em G/D D 7 G

to you that for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?  
 up - held by my right-eous, om - nip - o - tent hand.  
 and sanc - ti - fy to thee thy deep - est dis - tress.  
 thy dross to con - sume and thy gold to re - fine.  
 I'll nev - er— no, nev - er— no, nev - er for - sake!"

Words: K in Rippon's Selection of Hymns 1787 Music: Welsh hymn

Words: public domain Music: public domain

# Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth

1. Moth - er - ing God, you gave me birth in the bright  
 2. Moth - er - ing Christ, you took my form, of - fer - ing  
 3. Moth - er - ing Spir - it, nur - turing one, in arms of

morn - ing of this world. Cre - a - tor, source of  
 me your food of light, grain of life, and  
 pa - tience hold me close, so that in faith I

ev - 'ry breath, you are my rain, my wind, my sun.  
 grape of love, your ver - y bod - y for my peace.  
 root and grow un - til I flow'r, un - til I know.

WORDS: Julian of Norwich (1342-1419); adapt. Jean Janzen, 1991  
 MUSIC: Henry Percy Smith, 1874

MARYTON  
LM



Comforting - Daphne Odjig