



*"For where two or three
come together in my name,
I am there among them."*

Matthew 18:20, NIV

Sunday, September 6, 2020
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

CALL TO WORSHIP

God is our refuge and strength,
 A very present help in trouble.
Therefore, we will not fear
 Though the earth should change,
 Though the coronavirus has its way.
The Lord of hosts is with us,
 The God of Jacob is our refuge.

We gather with gratitude for the land, the air we breathe, and the water that sustains all life;
We give thanks for the opportunity to gather as community in our place of worship where we are:
 Created in the image of God, source of life and love,
 Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
 And set free by the Spirit to be God's healing in the world.

But our hearts are filled with more than gratitude – it is not as it was before the pandemic;
 We come, tentatively, uncertain about our worship practices and the future,
 We know in a new way our deep interconnectedness with all of creation,
 We know better the vulnerabilities of neighbours far and near.

Truthfully, the assurance of Your presence within our breath and body seems distant when we cannot sing, or hug the children, or share the peace.
 Come, Holy Spirit, come.
 Resonate in our bodies.
 Touch our hearts.
 End the virus!

As we cry out and make our prayers this day:
 Be our refuge and strength,
 Be a very present help in these pandemic days.

Widen our imagination with your large vision
 Equip us to courageously participate in your very present help,
 To be a refuge and strength in our hurting world.
 Amen.

GATHERING SONG

GREETING

During this time, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The presiding minister leads the prayer of the day.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Eternal God, your loving presence has surrounded us throughout this challenging season of pandemic. As we, at long last, re-enter our church building and reunite with one another in worship, we pray for your continuing grace, guidance and comfort. Encourage and equip us, give us wisdom and insight, keep our hearts and minds peaceful. Teach us to recognize our safe spaces and liturgies as a powerful witness to our love for our neighbours and one another. As we once again physically gather in your name, however strange and unsettling our new practices may seem at first, help us remember our faithful worship will always be holy, always pleasing to you. All this, and whatever else you see that we need, we ask in the name of Jesus, Immanuel, “God-with-us.” Amen.

FIRST READING: Exodus 12:1-14

A reading from Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I

will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

The reading may be concluded:

The word of the Lord.

The assembly responds:

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 119:33-40

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching; I shall keep it with all my heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for that is my desire. Incline my heart to your decrees and not to unjust gain. Turn my eyes from the beholding falsehood; give me life in your way. Fulfill your promise to your servant, which is for those who fear you. Turn away the reproach that I dread, because your judgements are good. Behold, I long for your commandments; by your righteousness enliven me.

SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14

The reading may be announced:

A reading from Romans.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The reading may be concluded:

The word of the Lord.

The assembly responds:

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20

The gospel is announced.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

The gospel concludes:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

https://1drv.ms/v/s!Alrwdlq5YZa1gy7XSCbAn_o3gkLZ

HYMN OF THE DAY

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

Unite your church, O God. Grant us the gifts of repentance and reconciliation. Bless the cooperative work of churches in this community, especially our sisters and brothers in the Stratford and District Council of Churches. Strengthen ecumenical partnerships; guide the work of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Protect your creation, O God. Teach us ways that do not harm what you have entrusted to our care. Renew and enliven places suffering from drought, flood, storms, or pollution. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbours. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward laws that protect the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbours to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit (especially Katana, Connor, Fritz, Neil, Maria, Ralph, Beryl, Rose Marie, Nya, Muriel, Karen, Ron, Brian, and Kolby). Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbours in and through our work. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in faith. As you equipped them, equip us with your protection and power, until with them we see your salvation. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

OFFERING PRAYER

After the table is set, the assisting minister may lead one of the following or a similar prayer.

Let us pray.

Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care; and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

The presiding minister continues, using one of the following or another appropriate form.

Loving One, compassionate Three, we offer our praise and thanksgiving for your good creation, for your presence in our brokenness, for the stories of our ancestors, and for the hope your companionship inspires.

On this day, as we return to you in public worship, we remember the coming of Jesus in poverty and oppression, the feeding and healing he shared, the stories of ordinary things which point us to you, and his embrace of the suffering and the dying.

We remember especially on a night of betrayal and desertion, that Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to those he was with, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.

And he took the cup after supper, again gave thanks, and gave it for them to drink saying,

This is the covenant, renewed in my blood,

Poured out for you and for all, for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Do this in remembrance of me.

Therefore, loving One, compassionate Three, we do remember and proclaim again his life of service and solidarity, his dying and rising, and his promise of new life, given and renewed each day.

By the coming of your Spirit, in this meal, in our gathering, and in every daily interaction:
Strengthen our faith in your promise, inspire our grateful response, and fire us with hope for the world.

By the promise and presence of Jesus, break open our hearts to share the love you are.
Pour us out in service to your hurting world.
Bring creation to fulfillment and make us new.

We offer these prayers in the name of the Loving One, trusting the faithfulness of the compassionate Three, now and always.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

The presiding minister may introduce the Lord's Prayer.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

COMMUNION

When giving the bread, the presiding minister says:

The body of Christ, given for you.
and each person may respond

Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

BENEDICTION

The presiding minister proclaims God's blessing.

God of grace and mercy, of healing and wisdom, from the shattered pieces of our changed lives you have brought us together as community, called and gathered, within and beyond the walls of this temple.

As you guide us through times of uncertainty, still you continue to cloak your people with joy and awe.

Send us forth from this place to bring light for the world, food for the hungry, and comfort for the sick.

And may your holy presence, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit keep us, guide us, and bless us as we journey forth from this place.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**** PLEASE REMEMBER ****

TO BOOK IN ADVANCE FOR "LIMITED" SUNDAY WORSHIP

By calling the office (519-271-8527) Monday to Thursday 8:00 am to 1:30 pm and Friday 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Below is a recorded announcement from Pastor Jeff regarding the reopening of our building for worship commencing on **Sunday, September 6, 2020**. This recording, together with an article published in the September Newsletter, spells out some of the steps mentioned.

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Alrwdlq5YZa1gxRWsxwZaYytwrg>

PLEASE CONTINUE TO CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT

www.zionstratford.com

For the above-mentioned video and Updates



INSTRUMENTALISTS / SOLOISTS NEEDED



As we slowly begin to see a glimmer of hope that this COVID crisis may soon be coming to an end, it is clear that singing, one of the most basic activities we have used for centuries to celebrate our faith, may still not be allowed for many months to come. The very early stages of returning to gathering at Zion will begin in September with appropriate social distancing. Music will still be a part of this new beginning as we are fortunate to have our regular accompanists, Sandra Mogensen and Marco Burak and I certainly hope to contribute as often as needed.

In this new Amber phase in September we will be allowed to include solo singers and instrumentalists in our services. I am putting out the call to anyone who may be willing to contribute their talents in these areas to bring some joy and healing to our regular 10:00 a.m. services. If you are nervous, please don't be as I will work with you until you are comfortable.

I will also occasionally be bringing in other local musicians who may not be members of our congregation. Please leave your contact information with Jane in the church office if you feel that you could participate in our services in this way. I look forward to hearing from you,

Minister of Music — Paul Shilton

HELP WANTED

A Sunday School teacher is required for our younger children when Sunday School resumes.

The class will consist of children from 3 years old, JK, SK, Grades 1 and 2.

If you are interested or would like more information,
please contact Paula McNaughton
at 519-273-2174.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The next meeting scheduled for the Finance Committee is **Tuesday, September 8 at 7:00 PM.**

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Endowment Committee has a meeting scheduled for **Thursday, September 10 at 7:00 PM.**

ETERNITY FOR TODAY

If you subscribe to "Eternity For Today" could you please call Jane in the office. Office hours are Monday to Friday between 8:00 AM and 1:30 PM.

Thank you!





**WE WANT TO
WELCOME YOU
BACK TO WORSHIP
EVEN THOUGH IT IS
WITH “*LIMITED*”
ATTENDANCE !**

**WE HAVE
MISSED YOU !!!**