



Wildwood
**Mennonite
Church**

Good Food for the Journey

Wildwood Mennonite Church // May 2, 2021

Worship Leader: Luke W // Music Leader: Linda G // Sermon: Josephine Kroeker

Welcome to Wildwood!

Welcome to our at-home (or wherever you happen to be) worship materials! We're so glad that worship in these now-normal-but-still-not-normal ways continues to be meaningful for you. Our worship themes this spring remind us that we are hardly the first Christian community to go through hard times, and that thousands of years of faith continue to point to God's faithfulness. This rarely means that we get what we want, yet somehow God continues to show up.

In that spirit of longing and expectation for the presence of God in all times and places, welcome. The Divine Spark is with you; come and see.

Music for Meditation // [I Want Jesus To Walk With Me](#) // Voices Together #306

Call to Worship

Here we are Lord, your church, uncertain, on an ever-changing journey. Show us your path.

Here we are, longing to know your way. Guide us to follow you.

Here we are, desiring only your comfort. Help us to hear your voice.

Here we are, God; lead us according to your will.

Peace Candle

Let us light this candle for tolerance and pray for unity that respects the diversity and wellbeing of all inhabitants of Canada and the world. Amen.

Sharing Time

Not hearing from one another in person through the Sharing Time is a significant loss for many of us. Sharing items can be emailed to the church office or the pastors to be shared with the congregation. If you're able, join us for our Sunday Morning Zoom gatherings, or check your email for the sharing items from last Sunday. Or maybe now would be a good time to pause your reading to call someone from church or elsewhere that you haven't heard from this week.

Congregational Prayer

Generous God, we are mindful this morning of your great bounty; your goodness to us. Though at times we grumble, we are aware that we have so much. We don't have it all, but mostly we enjoy warmth and comfort and a roof over our heads, food enough to eat, and reasonable physical and mental health.

And yet, in these uncertain times, difficult times, there have been stresses – some of them caused as a result of the pandemic and some simply caused by life itself.

We pray for those who have struggled with mental health issues, especially those who have been unable to work. We pray that they can trust enough to seek help and support as needed.

We pray for those who have had physical challenges, some of them undiagnosed. We pray for those who do the testing and those who read the results. Grant them insight into what is going on, and ways to remediate the issues. We pray for those whose treatments have caused difficult side effects and we pray for healing.

We pray for those waiting for surgery; pray that the wait will not be long and that the results will be successful.

We pray especially for Nelda's sister, Myrna, that there not be further setbacks, and that this illness will reverse itself sooner rather than later. For Myrna and for her family, grant strength and courage, patience and peace, and where there is despair, grant continued hope.

We also pray for...

We are grateful that Luke's ileostomy surgery went well and that the stoma was set up without complications. We pray that healing will continue, that recovery will go smoothly, and that he will be able to adjust to this new normal and live without pain. We pray that this surgery will lower stress also for Charmaine.

We are grateful that some of our frontline workers have received their vaccinations and for the relief of concern this provides. We are again grateful that these vaccines even exist, and for those who have worked at providing them, and for the difference this makes in our lives and in our world.

We are also grateful for...

And yet, we pray for all who are undergoing change, and that seems to be most of us. We pray for those who are anxious, those who are lonely, those living with fear, and those living with addictions of various types. We pray that even as we see light at the end of the tunnel - but know we are still in it - that we can see the need around us, and continue to offer support to one another, and to those around us in our neighbourhoods and in our community. May we



recognize where we have something to offer, however small, and grant us the generosity to share what we have.

So grant us open hearts and minds and a willingness to reach out; to care for those in need of both mental and physical support. To that end, O God, we ask your wisdom, guidance and strength, and ask your blessing on us as a community as we seek to be your hands and feet and heart in the world around us. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Song // [We Walk By Faith](#) // Voices Together #588

Children's Story // [Click here for video storytime with Don E!](#)

This week's story is [Last Stop on Market Street](#). It is written by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson.

Scripture // *Inclusive Bible* translation

Mark 6:30-44

The apostles came back to Jesus and reported all that they had done and taught. Jesus said to them, "Come away by yourselves to someplace more remote, and rest awhile." For there were many people coming and going, and the apostles hadn't had time to eat. So they went away in a boat to a deserted area.

The people saw them leaving and many recognized them, so they ran together on foot from all the cities and got there ahead of the apostles. When Jesus went ashore, there was a large crowd waiting for him, and he felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began to teach them many things.

By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, "This is a deserted place and it's very late. Why not dismiss them so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat?"

Jesus replied, "Give them something to eat yourselves."

They answered, "You want us to spend half a year's wages on bread for them to eat?"

"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Go look."

When they found out they reported back, "Five, and two fish."

Jesus told them to have the people sit down on the grass in groups of hundreds and fifties. Then Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing.



Jesus broke the loaves and handed them to the disciples to distribute among the people. He also passed out the two fish among them.

They all ate until they had their fill. The disciples gathered up the leftovers and filled twelve baskets of broken bread and fish. In all, five thousand families ate that day.

Sermon // Josephine Kroeker

(If you'd rather watch than read, [click here for the video version on youtube](#))

How do we move through suffering together?

How can we empathize with people's suffering, if we haven't experienced the same things?

What does it mean to give what we have?

Years ago I watched a movie called Millions. It is a beautiful film & I highly recommend it. It centres on a child named Damien. Damien is enamoured by the lives of the Catholic saints. He has memorized many of their biographical details, as well as the miracles that got them their sainthood.


Over the course of the movie, he has numerous conversations with saints, including Saint Peter, who gives him an eye witness account of the story we heard in our scripture reading today. The way that Peter tells it, the miracle happened when the young boy stepped forward to offer his meagre lunch to share. Slowly others placed what little they had into the baskets as they were passed around. Soon there was enough for everyone. The boy with the fish and loaves didn't set out to do a miracle; he was thinking about lunch. Nothing fancy, nothing we would necessarily categorize as miraculous.

I see this retelling of the feeding of the five thousand as a helpful image for what it means to collectively move through our lives— meeting our basic needs, suffering & of course celebrating. We are called to community living; to laugh with those who laugh, mourn with those who mourn. But how, exactly, do we do this?

Sometimes we—as a community of predominately privileged white settlers—might feel like we have nothing meaningful to give those who are experiencing discrimination at the hands of systems that have been designed to keep us thriving while others suffer. Do we offer our financial or material excess, which usually amounts to a bandaid over a stab wound? Can we even begin to empathize with that experience discrimination when we have never experienced it ourselves?

It is scary to face our privilege. We can feel defensive, because though we have benefitted from the white supremacy & patriarchy that is woven into the fabric of our society, we may not have been conscious of it. We have probably had very difficult life experiences that make us feel decidedly unprivileged. And yet, as a white person I must also consider all the experiences I haven't had because of my skin colour. For example, I am not followed around in stores while





shopping, I did not need to approach multiple lenders in order to buy a house, I haven't been asked to be a representative for my entire culture at an event, and as a white trans woman I have not had my life threatened whereas trans women of colour are murdered almost daily in "progressive" countries like the United States. We must reckon with our privilege. We must set aside our defensiveness as we sit down at the table of dismantling white supremacy, colonialism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia.

We may feel paralyzed in these situations & conversations. Maybe you have heard of saviour complex; the idea that privileged people swoop into a situation & "fix" it; usually by imposing colonial, Christian, cisgender, or heteronormative ideas onto a community. Once I learned about this kind of colonialism, I became much more wary of speaking or acting in places where I felt the spotlight of my privilege shining brightly.

But we can listen. Listening can look like a lot of things:

- Finding social media accounts that centre the experiences of populations experiencing discrimination & violence
 - Black, Indigenous, People of Colour communities
 - Women
 - Transgender People
- Reading books written by & about marginalized communities, both fiction & nonfiction
- Attending lectures by people from marginalized communities
- Becoming a pen pal with an incarcerated person, thereby humanizing the plight of those in prison
- So much more!

It is hard to know what to say or do when we hear the stories, the lived experiences of those who are oppressed. In truth, empathizing with someone who is suffering or struggling is more about what we do than what we say. We can adopt an attitude of learning; listening & accompanying those who have been silenced by systematic oppression, like in the cases of the #MeToo or #BlackLivesMatter movements. As we listen, we acknowledge the pain expressed, express gratitude for their vulnerability, & ask questions like, "How can I accompany you & your community in this work?"

Once we take the time to listen to the stories people are telling about their experiences, something miraculous happens: we can see the humanity in these movements. It's no longer about a hashtag, or pronouns, or political correctness. We want to stand with these people because they are people: people a lot like us, who laugh, cry, celebrate & mourn. We see the humanity in every person standing up to speak of these injustices & we want to stand with them, we want to amplify their voices, because what they have to say matters; what they are saying affects us all, no matter our station in life.

Another way that we can contribute to the lunch of the five thousand— so to speak—is something that historically has been a part of the Mennonite faith: mutual aid. An Anabaptist/Mennonite reading of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as our early attempts at imitating the early church’s communal nature led to living in tight-knit communities, helping those who needed by sharing wealth communally. This history of Anabaptists practicing mutual aid is both rich & inspiring.

Mutual aid is a bit of a radical idea (as were the Anabaptists themselves). What can it look like now in a world that really likes to keep things on an even keel? At this point I will hand it over to Dean Spade & Big Door Brigade who have put together a video explaining what mutual aid can look like in a wider societal/secular context.


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYPgTZef5Z0&t=1s>



Mutual aid, and perhaps a miraculous event, is about seeing different possibilities. What does this all mean for us, here at Wildwood? What does this all mean for the church as a whole? Does our faith play a role in how we do mutual aid? I think so. I think we as followers of Christ, as Anabaptists & Mennonites, are called to visit the imprisoned, feed the hungry, clothe the naked. We are called to walk with one another—not just other Christians, but humanity in general.

I want to close with a clip from an interview with Nadia Bolz-Weber from the On Being podcast:

“I don’t think faith is given in sufficient quantity to individuals necessarily. I think it’s given in sufficient quantity to communities. The same with that whole thing like God will not give you more than you can bear. I don’t think God will give you more than a community can bear. And we’ve individualized this thing of faith so much ...



"In a way that makes it inaccessible to people because they're like, well, I don't know if I believe this. Like the Apostles' Creed. I can't say the Creed because I don't know if I believe every line in the Creed. I'm like, oh, my God. Nobody believes every line of the Creed. But in a room of people for each line of the Creed, somebody believes it. So we're covered, right?"

"So this is Western individualism run amok in religion. It's not your creed. It's the church's creed and I think we've really lost track of that in this like personal me and Jesus, how I feel, what my piety is, my personal prayer life, all of that stuff, and we've lost the beauty of — this thing is really about community. It always has been the body of Christ."

Our faith is by its very nature communal. We celebrate that in myriad ways, including communion, congregational prayer, & singing. Naturally, this must also extend into our everyday lives. By listening to the stories of marginalized communities, humanizing them, standing with them against the oppressions & aggressions they face, & plugging in to mutual aid projects, we become the ears, feet, hands & heart of Christ in the world.

Song of Response // [Together](#) // Voices Together #389

Offering Prayer // Voices Together #1018

Creator Spirit, you clothe the flowers of the field: enable us to rejoice in all the gifts with which you fill us, and may that be enough for us. Amen.

Sending Song // [Go Into The World](#)

Benediction

Love wholeheartedly.

Live as you were created.

Be God's people in our fragmented world. Amen.