



"Lessons Learned"

Wildwood Mennonite Church // July 11, 2021
Worship Leader: Rick F // Music Leader: Marg E
Sermon: Sean Baergen and David Schwinghamer

Welcome to Wildwood!

Once again we welcome you from wherever you are to our zoom worship service. We do so in a time of hope and trepidation- hope that we soon can be meeting more in person in the usual way with vaccinations and all; trepidation because there are still variants forms of covid 19 popping up and questions around the degree of danger these pose.

Today we are taking a break from the 'Faith of Many Colours' theme and will be led by David and Sean in examining lessons we have learned in maintaining community through our Covid experience. What have we learned? And how can we do things better in the future?

Music for Meditation // [Let Us Build A House](#) // Voices Together #36

Call to Worship // Voices Together #863

Source of all hope and holiness,
We gather together to be church.
Bless those who are absent,
but not from our hearts.
Bless those who are distant,
but not from our love.
Bless each of us here,
that we may choose justice by your Spirit,
draw kindness from the well of your mercy,
and walk humbly in your path, Oh God.

Prayer for Truth & Reconciliation // Brenda M

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

These recent days in Canada have been historic. There have been moments of despair, remorse and sadness. And there have been moments that bring us hope.

We as a nation have been sobered by the confirmation of reports of hundreds of graves, now found in the shadow of residential schools across the country. Finding the remains of 751 people in the Cowessess First Nation is especially saddening to us in

Saskatchewan. Perhaps these events call us to reread or read for the first time and reflect upon the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, or at least the 94 Calls to Action.

This past week has seen the ceremony of our prime minister and the chief of the Cowessess First Nation signing documents that are part of the transfer of control over children in care to the community.

Our new governor general, Mary Simon, is the first indigenous person to be appointed in this role. In her first speech as Governor General of Canada, she has demonstrated her traditional way of introducing herself, by telling us where she comes from and who her family is. She has expressed her intention in what she sees as work that needs to be done:

“...my appointment comes at an especially reflective and dynamic time in our shared history. During my time as Governor General, I will work every day towards promoting healing and wellness across Canadian society.

To me that means stopping to fully recognize, memorialize, and come to terms with the atrocities of our collective past that we are learning more about each day. It means we must thoughtfully work hard towards the promise of a better tomorrow.”

Please pray with me this prayer for reconciliation, taken from the prayer written by Dianne Climenhage and published by MCC in 2019:

Creator God,

Reveal to us your way of reconciliation and guide us into right relationships with all living things.

Lead us to understand how Indigenous peoples have been and continue to be profoundly harmed by settler people and institutions.

Lead us to repent when we as settlers deny Indigenous peoples respect, dignity and fullness of life.

Help us to listen compassionately, to speak humbly and to act justly.

Help us to seek the peace, justice and reconciliation you desire among all your children.

Amen.

And God, help us “ work every day towards promoting healing and wellness across Canadian society.”





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

Creator and Sustainer, Source of everything, we come with gratitude and thanksgiving for life and all the blessing found in everyday living. We realize in the big picture we are people of plenty. May we never forget that, unlike us, there are so many people in the world that are forced to live hand to mouth, never knowing if there will be enough. For those people the world over we pray- may they get their share of the blessings of life too.

At the same time we realize we live in a world full of sorrows too: wars, famine, drought, pandemic, global warming - these are just a few of the situations we and/or others live with. Sadly, we know we have been part of the cause of some of the sorrows mentioned. Please forgive us and show us ways of living that make things better, not worse.

We pray for our leaders- of our country, our province, our city. May they use their power for the good of the people now and into the future. Please grant them wisdom in all they do in their various roles.

We think of our community. May we live in harmony with our neighbours and help us to work towards justice and equality.

Finally, I pray for this church, for each of us who are a part of the group. You know where we have needs and where we have had needs met. We thank you in advance for your presence and love. Help us to help each other where there are needs. Grant each one of us a sense of your spirit working in and through us as we live out our faith. In all this, we thank you God, Amen

Song // [Amazing Grace](#) // Richard Handlon Correctional Facility, Michigan // Director: Erinn Epp // Voices Together #163

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

This week's story is [I Am Human: A Book of Empathy](#) by Susan Verde with art by Peter H Reynolds.

Scripture // *The Inclusive Bible* Translation

Psalm 85

*Yhwh, favor your land once again
and restore the fortunes of Israel;
forgive the guilt of your people
and cover all their sins.
Set aside all your anger,
and calm the heat of your rage.
Return to us, O God of our deliverance!
Put an end to your displeasure with us.
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will your wrath continue from one generation to the next?
Won't you revive us again
so that your people can rejoice in you?
Let us see your mercy, Yhwh,
and grant us your deliverance.*

*I will listen to what you have to say, Yhwh—
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for your people and your friends
so long as they don't return to their folly.
Your salvation is near for those who revere you
and your glory will dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Fidelity will sprout from the earth
and justice will lean down from heaven.
Yhwh will give us what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Justice will march before you, Yhwh,
and peace will prepare the way for your steps.*



Sermon // David Schwinghamer and Sean Baergen

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

Today is a day of many feelings, after an isolating winter of restrictions the Province is opening up. Some feel joy at the chance to travel and see loved ones, others feel a gruff it's about time, and others feel concern and anxiety. We have all had different experiences, and as the option to regroup nears we all continue to have different experiences. So let us do what we have always done at Wildwood and centre ourselves around loving our neighbours. We have the opportunity to build back better by building with empathy and grace. Some of us can't wait to rip the masks off, others want to keep them on a while longer, some of us can't wait to return to in-person services and small groups, others feel safer on virtual platforms. And yet we are all still the body of Christ at Wildwood, and together we can face this new season together with empathy and grace for one another.

Through this past season we have excelled at maintaining connections within the church and still seeing the ministry of the church continue, though it has been on a much smaller scale. We have still thrived in the midst of adverse times, however as we regroup we face a new challenge, breaking out of our bubble. I had a conversation with a friend from a different church who was searching for a new young adults group, he said "I really enjoy the atmosphere of my church but everyone sticks to the same cliques they kept in high school, there are many people to meet, who don't want to be met." At Wildwood we've had pride in how welcoming we are, one of the reasons my partner and I attend this church is that on our first visit the young adults dragged us out to brunch, thank you Graham and Michelle. But in a message about looking to the future it would be remiss to not mention the danger of identifying as a welcoming church while leaving a season of small pockets and isolation. We know we are welcoming, and we live in the tension of feeling safe avoiding strangers and acquaintances alike. Let me illustrate, a few weeks ago at supper my partner and I were reminiscing about pre-covid times, and we stopped to discuss a childhood friend of mine, and the question was raised: "do you think we'll ever see him again" and the answer was somewhat enlightening to this great query, "No, I'm on great terms with him, and really like him, but after two years of isolation and not interacting with him he just doesn't come to mind when I'm making plans." We pride ourselves on being welcoming, but let's not be blind to the fact that after all this time it's easy to forget about those outside of our bubbles.

This has been something that we have done well this year through our use of breakout rooms. I can say personally that the majority of people I have met at Wildwood I have met through these breakout rooms. I have talked to so many more people than I would have normally just in person. We can recognize this as a great success for the church! So when we move back to in-person, we shouldn't just toss away this success, but embrace it, and adapt it so that we can continue building connections in the church. Perhaps this looks like sitting next to someone you don't normally sit beside in church. Or, when we can do potlucks again, purposefully having tables made up of people we don't usually talk to! These are the things to think about, and now is the time to try and think beyond the status quo.





Another success of this year is the involvement of people not just in Saskatoon. With the flexibility of zoom, people have been able to join from anywhere! When Tiffanie and I were in Calgary for a month, we were still able to attend Wildwood. This is something that we would not have been able to do pre-COVID. Now that we have the experience and the equipment to support some form of online service, we can continue to offer a worship experience beyond the church walls. This can be valuable, not just for those who are out of town, but also for those who may not be able to attend church, or are not comfortable attending church for whatever personal reason.

Thinking outside of church, we have all had to take stock of what is truly important in our lives and what we can learn to let go of. Before COVID, I found that I was so busy with other things that I rarely took the time to tend to and cultivate my relationships with family and friends. Once all the peripheral went away, I found a renewed focus to connect with those who I have let drift away. I have talked with my family more often. I have started having video calls with friends outside of Saskatoon. These are things that have always been an option for me, but I have never prioritized them in my life. That's not to say that I don't enjoy the things that I was doing before COVID and that I will not start them again. Instead, I hope that I will be able to remember the priorities I have learned over the past year and adjust my schedule accordingly.

I encourage everyone to think about what has been different about this year. Go beyond the obvious. What has brought you joy this year? What have you missed doing? What are you looking forward to the most? Are there any things that you did on a regular basis before COVID that you don't have to do and you haven't minded not doing lately? Take advantage of the things we have learned, and use them to help not just go back to normal, but go back to a better normal.

Looking ahead we don't have all the answers, or many at all, but we have questions, musings, and hopes for our community moving ahead.

- We all know the potlucks are practically a sacrament in our faith tradition, and we don't know how we'll do it, how we'll reinvent old practices in new times, but we will. We'll return to the joys of community and food. The spaces where strangers leave as friends.
- In the coming season we look forward to catching up. We will celebrate together, and we will mourn together. We will share life together.
- With the 1 year commitment our church has made to the food bank we anticipate a season of service and new connections.
- Looking ahead we know that we will continue to explore the journey of reconciliation, both as a faith community and as Canadians. The word reconciliation can seem nebulous, but there is another word that we are more familiar with - repentance. We can continue on our journey by repenting. Reconciliation cannot occur without repentance, and while we may not always know what to do with words like reconciliation we as a peace church know what to do with repentance, and we know



how essential it is to bring shalom back into our relations. As a nation, as a church, and as individuals we all have to wrestle with Canada's history and legacy. In 2017 MCC wrote these words as part of the response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to actions: *"We are aware that we have a long path to walk. We hope to build relationships with First Nations communities so that we can continue this learning journey and walk this path together. We are followers of Jesus Christ, the great reconciler. We are aware that words without actions are not only ineffective but may also be harmful. We commit ourselves to take your challenges to us very seriously. We will seek to model the reconciling life and work of Jesus in seeking reconciliation with you. We will encourage our churches to reach out in practical and loving ways, including dialogue and expressions of hospitality."* This summer, I ask you to join me in learning, listening, repenting, and asking more questions than there are easy answers for.

Today we leave you with more questions than answers, we leave you with queries, ponderings, and hopes. We turn to the lectionary to point us towards scripture and the hope we find within.

Psalm 85

*Yhwh, favor your land once again
and restore the fortunes of Israel;
forgive the guilt of your people
and cover all their sins.
Set aside all your anger,
and calm the heat of your rage.
Return to us, O God of our deliverance!
Put an end to your displeasure with us.
Will you be angry with us forever?
Will your wrath continue from one generation to the next?
Won't you revive us again
so that your people can rejoice in you?
Let us see your mercy, Yhwh,
and grant us your deliverance.*

*I will listen to what you have to say, Yhwh—
a voice that speaks of peace,
peace for your people and your friends
so long as they don't return to their folly.
Your salvation is near for those who revere you
and your glory will dwell in our land.
Love and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.*



*Fidelity will sprout from the earth
and justice will lean down from heaven.
Yhwh will give us what is good,
and our land will yield its harvest.
Justice will march before you, Yhwh,
and peace will prepare the way for your steps.*

Song of Response // [Draw the Circle Wide](#) // Eastminster United Church // Voices Together #802

Offering Prayer

Generous Creator. -You are the beginning of all things; everything we see around us is ultimately here because of you. We thank you for the world we live in and the many blessings of all kinds we have been given. We indeed have so much. Open our hearts to share of our resources, whatever they are, for the benefit of others and because of the love you give us. Amen

Sending Song // [Heal the World](#) // Child Prodigy Cover // Makati Banni, producer

Benediction // Voices Together #1053

May the God of Glory,
the Word of life,
and the Spirit of truth
bless you all,
now and forever.