

Shared Worship Sunday

The pastors of:
St. Peter's Brodhagen,
St. Peter's Zurich
Trinity London,
Trinity Windsor

invite you to join us in worship

Some Sunday in July or August



Welcome

Hello and welcome to worship this 8th of August, 2021, celebrating the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

Once again we gather our four churches together, for worship. Welcome on behalf of the congregations of St. Peter's Brodhagen, St. Peter's Zurich, Trinity London, and Trinity Windsor; and their pastors Laura, Nadine, Steve, and Mike. Each of these occasions offer us the opportunity to experience worship that is the same but a little bit different from what you're used to, hearing some new voices along the way. Our guest preacher today is Rev. Paul Gehrs, assistant to the National Bishop.

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you!**

Prayer of the day:

Gracious God, your blessed Son came down from heaven to be the true bread that gives life to the world. Give us this bread always, that he may live in us and we in him, and that, strengthened by this food, we may live as his body in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen**

1 Kings 19:4-8

[Elijah] himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Gospel Reading: John 6:35, 41-51

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not complain among yourselves. No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Homily

Rev. Paul Gehrs

Assistant to the National Bishop, Justice and Leadership

I live on Treaty One Territory: the land of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. I am grateful for the historic and ongoing stewardship of water, land, community and spirituality offered by Indigenous Elders and leaders. Many harms have happened and much healing needs to happen. The ongoing research and announcements regarding unmarked graves at former residential schools means that this a particularly significant time of grieving, trauma, reckoning with history and soul-searching. On June 1, 2021, the ELCIC Bishops issued a letter entitled *A Renewed Call to Reconciliation*. I receive these words as wise counsel and a calling.

Acknowledging traditional territory is important to me. It is meaningful, prayerful and liturgical every time. It grounds me in my current place and context, keeps me mindful of how I got here, and amplifies my gratitude for the ones who helped me get here.

My name is Paul Gehrs and my pronouns are he/him.

I serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Justice and Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations with the ELCIC National Office. I am grateful for all the members of the ELCIC who help me live as a Christian, and I honour the gifts and witness you share with the world on a daily basis.

Jesus said “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Then the people began to complain...

In this story, the people who *know Jesus best* fail to recognize Jesus as the bread of life. The ones who complain are neighbours and friends who knew his family, watched him grow up and lived in the same hometown.

It seems to me that today, the ones most likely to claim to know Jesus best are those most connected to the church. The power I see in this text is that it highlights any temptations I may have to underestimate the gift of the bread of life. God’s love is constant, God’s desire to feed the hungry is eternal, God’s people are diverse and abundant.

The motivation for the complaining is open to interpretation.

Perhaps Jesus is too familiar. I miss a lot when I do not pay attention to God’s activity in the ordinary and the everyday.

Perhaps there is jealousy that someone else is getting ahead. A bitter of feeling of *What makes you better than me?*

A lot of damage has been done in the name of trying to prevent someone else from becoming the person God calls them to be. Not everything in life is a competition; especially in matters of spirituality.

Or perhaps it is fear. If Jesus is speaking truth, then I might have to change my ways. A new path can be scary; even one full of grace.

Partaking in the bread of life begets a journey of discipleship and transformation.

Perhaps complaining is a way of avoiding change or...truth.

As one response to the complaining, Jesus points to the Story of God providing Manna in the wilderness. God’s people were in the wilderness as part of a journey of liberation –from slavery to a new life in a promised land. In the daily collecting of Manna, the community learned many lessons: lessons about utter reliance on God, the futility of hoarding, and the consequences of complaining. The journey to liberation is not always easy; but God is with us.

In the course of a lifetime, most people experience some time in a metaphorical wilderness. Every person has a life-story. Lessons about utter reliance on God are personal and sacred. It is a hard truth that some people have more and longer wilderness experiences than others do. It is also a hard truth that some people experience much more oppression than others do. The Manna story reminds us that it is God’s desire to liberate people and establish justice.

Seeking justice and reconciliation are essential elements in the life of every disciple. Personally, I

describe this as *a calling to value persons, respect creation and build community by seeking peace, justice and dignity for all; and a calling to live with integrity, creativity, and a deep sense of the holy.*

In recent years, I have been growing more conscious of how much my own privilege influences how I perceive the world. The more I listen, the more I hear stories of how systemic racism and other forms of oppression continue to inflict harm in individuals, in communities, in societies and in the church. I feel a deeper calling to self-awareness and a desire to create safe spaces for listening. At the same time, I have a growing sense of my own need to be transformed by God in order for God's mission of liberation to be fully achieved. Regularly, Jesus and I have frank discussions about whether I am part of the problem or part of the solution.

Experiences that create meaningful transformation commonly include moments of discomfort, especially if I am hearing that my own actions have had a negative effect on other people. It requires commitment, hard work and prayer to be present and engaged in the midst of discomfort.

I remember the first time I took anti-racism training. It was required training because I was serving as an ecumenical partner on an Anglican Committee. I felt upset and indignant by one of the exercises. I began to complain. As we debriefed this in a small group, one person in my group, who is a black man and a priest, looked me in the eye and, with abundance of grace, asked me: "Paul, how often do you think about the colour of your skin?"

"Almost never," I had to admit.

He replied, "I think about it every day."

It was, for me, a transformative moment that marked the beginning of a long and ongoing journey. His words continue to sustain me in multiple ways.

In 2015, the ELCIC National Convention repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. As a church, we confessed that this doctrine encourages patterns of domination and oppression that continue to afflict Indigenous peoples and the land today. And we committed to reflecting on history, seeking a deeper understanding of issues, upholding human rights and working for reconciliation.

On the last day of 2015 convention, I asked a youth delegate "what was a convention highlight for you?"

She said "the Resolution on the Doctrine of Discovery. We took that doctrine, and flushed it down the toilet!"

If only it were that easy. The journey for reconciliation and healing requires commitment, listening, hard work and prayer.

The work is both urgent and long term.

Jesus said "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

Then the people began to complain...

But Jesus did not stop: he continued to feed, to heal, to teach and to love. He continued all the way to the cross, where he himself said, I am thirsty. And to the resurrection where he said:

*Peace be with you.
Feed my sheep.
and Follow me.*

We live with parallel realities:

On the one hand, God claims us, loves us, holds us and honours us for who we are. We never need to doubt this. We spend our lives learning the depths of this truth.

On the other hand, God desires a world without hunger and thirst. As long as there is hunger and thirst, there is more work to do. We spend our lives being transformed and working for transformation.

Radically loved and affirmed. Radically called to transformation.

Thanks be to God who gives us a faithful community, so we never journey alone.

Thanks be to God who gives us the bread of life in order to sustain us on journeys of discipleship, transformation and liberation.

Thank be to God who so loves the world.

PEACE Angels said it to startled shepherds, Jesus said it to frightened followers. And now these words which come from heaven are shared to make us whole and make us one.
Peace be with you. **And also with you.**

THE PRAYERS. 20210808

Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

For the church of Christ in all its diverse forms. For mission developers, new mission starts, and all communities of faith exploring new models of ministry for the sake of the gospel. For congregations facing difficult decisions about their future. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For the health and well-being of creation. For shade trees that provide refuge from the hot summer sun. For lakes, rivers, and oceans contaminated by pollution and all who lack clean water. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For those called to positions of authority in our legal system, we pray. For judges, lawyers, law clerks, and court employees who ensure the fair administration of justice. For corrections officers and prison chaplains, that they would deal mercifully with those who are incarcerated. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For all who cry out to you in their affliction. For exiles, refugees, and others who face long and difficult journeys, uncertain about the future. For all who mourn the death of a loved one. For all who are sick. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God of love, fill our congregations of St. Peter's, Brodhagen | St.Peter's, Zurich | Trinity, London and Trinity, Windsor ... with gratitude for the gifts we have received from you. Renew our ministries, heal our divisions, and open us to the needs of our neighbours. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who have been raised to eternal life, we give thanks. With all the saints we praise you for the bread of life that keeps us in your love forever. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit we pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as 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, now and forever. **Amen**

Benediction

The blessing of God,
who provides for us, feeds us, and journeys with us,
✠ be upon you now and forever.

Amen.

Dismissal

***WORSHIP** is over,
now service begins.*

*Go on your way **REJOICING**,
enabled by the **HOLY SPIRIT**
to love and serve the **RISEN LORD.***

Thanks be to God!

