

Call to Worship

Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary.
Praise God with instrument and voice.
Praise God with joy and trust.
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!

Hymn

Jesus bids us shine

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1. Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light,
like a little candle burning in the night.
In the world is darkness, so we must shine,
you in your small corner, and I in mine.
2. Jesus bids us shine, first of all for him;
well he sees and knows it if our light grows dim.
He looks down from heaven to see us shine,
you in your small corner, and I in mine.
3. Jesus bids us shine, then, for all around;
many kinds of darkness in this world abound;
sin and want and sorrow; so we must shine,
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Words and Music: public domain

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of grace,
you created our minds to grow in wisdom.
You created our hearts to expand with love for you and your world.
You created our voices to sing your praises forever.
Fill us to overflowing with your Holy Spirit, so we may worship you in spirit and in truth, bold and unafraid to follow Jesus, even when challenges confront us.
In this time of worship, assure us of your presence with us and reveal to us the path you open before us, for we live to serve as your people wherever you lead.

**God who creates the future,
you call us to follow you, yet we prefer familiar paths.
You offer us new beginnings, yet change makes us uncomfortable.
You invite us into the fullness of life, yet we resist more than we already know.
Forgive us, O God, and make of us courageous disciples
ready to serve in Jesus' name.**

God of wisdom, open our minds to your truth, our hearts to your love, and our hands to do your will as we listen to the Scriptures. With your Holy Spirit, equip us to follow Jesus, who is your Living Word. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 4th Sunday after Pentecost. June 25, 2023. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

In Christ, we are a new creation; the old life is gone and the new life has come!

Trust that God loves you and forgives you. Do not be afraid to make a new start!

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Scripture Reading Colossians 3:12-21

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Perfect Harmony

I'd like to teach the world to sing, in perfect harmony.

If you are like me, and lived in the 1970's you would recognize this phrase from a Coca Cola commercial which, as Wikipedia says, "portrayed a positive message of hope and love, featuring a multicultural collection of teenagers on top of a hill appearing to sing the song."¹ As soon as I hear the words, I begin to sing the melody in my head, "I'd like to teach the world to sing, in perfect harmony..."

It was actually "I'd like to buy the world a coke", but the remake of the jingle into a full-length song has the edited version in my head.

Regardless, this line from a song was what came to mind as I read the words in the letter to the Colossians where Paul says, "Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (3:14) And though music and clothing are not something I would have compared in the same sentence; it is an interesting way to talk about how to live the new life we have been given in Christ.

¹ [I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing \(In Perfect Harmony\) - Wikipedia](#). Accessed June 22, 2023.

Paul begins this section with “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”² (3:12-14).

Professor Stan Mast describes how we clothe ourselves for Christian community in this way...

When we get dressed each day, we begin with what? Our underwear, what old timers called “foundation garments.” When Paul talks about compassion and humility, he is talking about the foundation garments of life, because those two character traits are fundamental to human relationships. They summarize how we feel deep down inside about each other and about ourselves. Putting on compassion means that we feel with each other. And humility is how we feel about ourselves—not negative feelings about ourselves, but a lack of focus on ourselves. Humility will keep us from insisting on our own way, our own rights, our own agenda. Without compassion and humility, human relationships don’t work.

Next, Paul calls us to put on the basic work clothes of the Christian life—kindness and gentleness. Those are the jeans and sweatshirt we wear in the everyday world. Kindness means, at least, be courteous and considerate of other people. That’s not very fancy or sexy, but simple human kindness will do more to demonstrate the life changing work of Christ than almost anything else. And put on gentleness, because we are all so fragile that we need gentle treatment. In a violent world, the children of God must wear gentleness like old worn out jeans.

Then, each day we must put on the shoes of patience. The world is filled with problems, but problems become splits, divisions, and warfare when we run out of patience with the problem. So, says Paul, put on the shoes of patience and keep walking with each other, even when it feels like an endurance race. And just because we humans can so easily annoy each other, we need to carry a full wallet of forgiveness. Realistically, we can’t keep from “grieving” each other, as Paul says. So we’ll need to reach into wallets daily and pull out a big wad of forgiveness, sometimes 70 times 7.

The final article of clothing Paul mentions is the overcoat of love; “and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them together in perfect unity.” Indeed, we can’t and won’t put on any of the other articles of Christian clothing without love...Paul says the main thing you need for Christ-like living is...Christ-like love that covers a multitude of sins.

[In this verse from chapter 3 Paul] describes the Christian’s workaday wardrobe.³

² All Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

³ [STAN MAST Colossians 3:12-17 - Center for Excellence in Preaching \(cepreaching.org\)](#). Accessed June 22, 2023.

So what's this got to do with perfect harmony? Well, I guess it depends on your fashion sense, but in this case it is about things working together. Christian community is not perfect community. We get things wrong. Sometimes deadly wrong. For most of us though we are just humans trying to do our best and we mess it up... over and over again. Which is why Paul writes about forgiveness, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

When these qualities can be found in community...not perfection, as that is not attainable...but rather an abiding sense of connecting, compassion, and care, grounded in love, then we are truly a people living a new life in Christ. That is what Paul is referring to when he talks about being called into the one body. We are the body of Christ in the world and in this body the peace of Christ is to rule in our hearts. That peace is apparent even in times of conflict, turmoil, change, transitions, or struggle. It is a peace that is felt deep within regardless of the circumstances one is facing. It comes from trusting that God is with us. God is with us as individuals and in the community that is the church.

And we are called to be thankful. Again, this is not a flippant thanksgiving. It is being thankful for our life in Christ which brings that deep peace. Thankful for each other, thankful for Christ dwelling in us, with us, and working through us.

How do we get to know this life in Christ, this peace, this understanding of Christian community? It is through abiding in the word of Christ, dwelling in it, which means taking time for learning through the reading of scripture, worship, and prayer. Sharing and learning with one another, working together, teaching one another in wisdom, and that overarching word of love. Love, that again, is compassionate, kind, humble, meek and patient.

And we rejoice together. One of the beautiful ways of being in community is through music. When we sing together there is something that can touch us deep within. When music is shared with us it can stir us to tears, applause, healing. It is said that music is a universal language. Paul instructs the community of faith saying, "with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God." Music in the community can heal. It joins us in body, mind, and spirit. Music is something that we can do together, as one body in Christ.

Paul's instruction in this part of the letter to the faithful of Colossae is about how to be the body of Christ. How to be in community with one another offering hospitality. A place where we sing songs offering our praise and giving thanks.

How loudly would it speak to the world...demonstrate to the world...if Christians really lived out this word of love? If in whatever we did, in word or deed, we did everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him?

Yes, we get it wrong, a lot. Still, we are to strive to be a faithful community of Christians who love. A community where love is demonstrated in connecting, compassion, and

care. In Paul's words, a community of holy and beloved children of God who clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Who bear with one another, and forgive each other. Who above all else, clothe themselves with love, binding everything together in perfect harmony.

Let us sing songs of praise, love, forgiveness and grace in our hearts. and in our heads. and with our voices. May our love for each other and for all we encounter, knowing that there is no face you will see that God does not love...may our love for all make music that resonates with harmony so beautiful that it is healing, makes others and ourselves curious about this loving God, and flows out from this place on the wings of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, with Christ and through Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of compassion and courage,
In our weakness you are strength.
In our sorrows you are comfort and peace.
We thank you for your embracing presence in our lives.
Embrace each situation we lay before you today with your steadfast love.

We thank you for moments of joy that break into our lives,
for love given and received,
for friends who furnish our life with meaning and happiness,
and for family who embrace us with love and understanding.
We pray for those who cannot feel joy today,
for any estranged from family or friends,
for those feeling stress as the costs of living rise,
and for those who face any kind of loss.
Embrace us all with your mercy, O God,
And give us grace to respond to needs around us.

God of the nations,
We pray for our country as Canada Day approaches.
We give thanks for peace and plenty in this land
and for resources to support those facing difficulties in our communities.
Challenge those who govern to share resources as a generous global partner,
and commit to international efforts to preserve the earth for future generations.
Guide leaders to set fair policies that protect vulnerable groups,
and ensure equity and dignity for all.
Embrace us all with your mercy, O God,
And give us grace to respond to needs around us.

Eternal God,
We thank you for your people in every age
who have entered into your heavenly presence,

especially those dear to our own hearts.

Thank you for memories that inspire us,

for love and laughter shared and lessons learned.

Hear us now as we offer prayers in silence for the concerns on our hearts this day...

Silence for at least 10-15 seconds.

We sum up our prayers, spoken and unspoken, in the words that Jesus taught us:

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Lord's Prayer

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.

Invitation to the offering

Around us the gifts of God's good earth appear in fields and gardens, speaking of God's goodness to us. Our gifts also speak of God's goodness as we offer our gratitude for all we have received in Christ and in creation.

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Hymn

This is my Father's world

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1. This is my Father's world,
and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought;
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas
God's hands the wonders wrought.

2. This is my Maker's world;
the birds their carols raise;
the morning light, the lily white,
declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Maker's world;
God shines in all that's fair;
in the rustling grass God's footsteps pass,
God speaks to me everywhere.

3. This is my Saviour's world;
oh let me not forget
that though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Saviour's world;
the battle is not done;
Jesus, who died, shall be satisfied,
and earth and heaven be one.

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Benediction

The week ahead is God's holy time.
Cherish every moment as a gift of grace.
Enjoy daily servings of work and play, communion and faith.
Live in partnership with our loving God.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*.
United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P182.

And may the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Romans 15:13 NRSV*)