

4th Sunday after the Epiphany – February 1, 2026

Call to Worship

Come and hear the good news.
No matter what is happening in your life,
God's blessing and love is with us.

Come and hear what God wants us to do:
live lives of justice and love and truth.

Come and get courage and strength to be disciples for Christ,
embracing Kingdom values rather than those of the world.

**We're here, ready to listen, open to change,
expecting to be blessed by our time together.**

Adapted from [Worship Elements: January 29, 2023](#)

Hymn

Breathe on me, breath of God

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1. Breathe on me, breath of God; fill me with life anew, that I may love what thou dost love and do what thou wouldst do.	2. Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure, until with thee I will one will to do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, breath of God, till I am wholly thine, until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.	4. Breathe on me, breath of God, so shall I never die, but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.

"Breathe on me, breath of God." Words by Edwin Hatch. Public domain.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Loving God,
we come this morning seeking to abide in your presence.
Open our minds to your Spirit of wisdom,
that we may know how to live as your people.
Open our hearts to your Spirit of truth,
that we may love all your people with a love
that speaks of justice, kindness, and radical grace.
May this time of worship be authentic and pleasing to you.

Far too often, O God, we desire to look wise in the eyes of the world.
And so, we offer to you our prayer of confession.

**We have not spoken truth with our hearts.
We have said and done hurtful things to our friends.
We have forgotten our true identity,**

wandering into ways that are not yours.
We have lost the path of true worship,
focusing on form and words rather than deeds.
We have forgotten what true discipleship is.

Forgive us and help us live into becoming
the people you have created and called us to be:
people of justice and love and truth
and humility, and yes, even foolishness.
May we be disciples for Christ, embracing our true identity,
even in the face of the world's scorn and derision.

[Worship Elements: January 29, 2023](#)

Assurance of Forgiveness

God has called us and blesses us
when we live God's ways and not the world's.
God's love embraces us
even when we fall short of what God desires
for our lives and actions.
Know that the God of blessing
loves and forgives us with a fierce tenderness.
And in so knowing,
may our lives and souls be transformed.

[Worship Elements: January 29, 2023](#)

Prayer for Understanding

Holy God, your people turn to your Word for truth and guidance in every age. Send your Holy Spirit to inspire our understanding of your Scripture, read and interpreted today. Help us hear the truth for our lives and our times through Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. February 1, 2026. Year A.

Scripture Reading Matthew 4:23-5:12

²³⁻²⁵ From there he went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God's kingdom was his theme—that beginning right now they were under God's government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with a sickness, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all. More and more people came, the momentum gathering. Besides those from Galilee, crowds came from the "Ten Towns" across the lake, others up from Jerusalem and Judea, still others from across the Jordan.

You're Blessed

⁵ ¹⁻² When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

³ “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.

⁴ “You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

⁵ “You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are—no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.

⁶ “You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.

⁷ “You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.

⁸ “You’re blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

⁹ “You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.

¹⁰ “You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.

¹¹⁻¹² “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don’t like it, / do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

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Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Blessed?

Last week Saturday I sat with the news that another person, Alex Pretti, had been killed by ICE agents on the streets of Minneapolis. The release of a song by Bruce Springsteen that dropped three days ago is keeping all this injustice in the forefront. He is making sure that the harm being done is kept in our hearts and minds. This is important as the craziness of this world is easy to forget as we get on with our everyday and newsfeeds bring another story another day. But for thousands living in fear, they cannot forget.

Then this Saturday I sat and tried to digest what had so far been revealed in the Jeffrey Epstein files.

Now I know this is not news about our own country, but if we think for a moment that we are immune to what is going on with our neighbours to the south then we are living in a bubble. Our world has become far too globally aware and connected for us to think that what happens somewhere else is not going to have ripple effects here, and even if these things are happening elsewhere, as God’s people we are called to pray for healing for the nations.

Thing is, these things are not far away. For myself, as someone who has experienced sexual trauma, reading just one excerpt of what had been released in the Epstein files was a trigger for me. Now for those of you who are unaware, there are stories of girls as young as thirteen being checked to see how tight their vaginas were and there are more horrors. The files seem to indicate that authorities don't even know what has happened to some of the girls. Sound familiar?

Here in our own country, we have documented stories of murdered and missing indigenous women. Again, we are not immune. We, like so many others, are not directly affected so we hear the story and get on with our day, but those who have been affected are daily reminded of their own horror and loss. Loss of virginity, loss of dignity, loss of life. Be aware that though the large majority of those affected by these kinds of things are women, there are men who have their own stories.

Now, before I go on, I want to look at the scripture and then hopefully tie this all together in ways that make sense. Even as I write this though, I know that there is no making sense of what happens to people in this world. The one most often asked question for people as they witness or hear about the horrible and difficult things in the world is, "Where is God in this?"

If there is a God, where is God in this?

I suspect to some extent we will all go to our graves with this question. But in these troubling times, as with time throughout the ages, it is helpful to actually look for God in this. And that is where what we have come to know as the Beatitudes comes in. It is also helpful to put these words in their context. Hear about the context of these words from the scripture itself.

²³⁻²⁵ From there [Jesus] went all over Galilee. He used synagogues for meeting places and taught people the truth of God. God's kingdom was his theme—that beginning right now they were under God's government, a good government! He also healed people of their diseases and of the bad effects of their bad lives. Word got around the entire Roman province of Syria. People brought anybody with a sickness, whether mental, emotional, or physical. Jesus healed them, one and all. More and more people came, the momentum gathering. Besides those from Galilee, crowds came from the "Ten Towns" across the lake, others up from Jerusalem and Judea, still others from across the Jordan.¹

This is the context of the next statements about blessing. People were bringing anyone, anybody, with a sickness to Jesus and he healed them, but this was within the framework of telling them about God's kingdom, a kingdom under God's rule, and in the background

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture references taken from [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

was the Roman Empire. All of this is the setting in which Jesus was teaching and preaching about another way of living in the world.

Of course, we know that Jesus is no longer physically with us, so for the most part, we don't see that kind of healing, but it does not mean that healing does not happen. Also, many times our pain and suffering do end in death, but what that means is that we are freed from the earthly bonds of sorrow, sickness, and death, and get to be with God in another way where those things are no more. (Rev 21:4)

Still, there is much healing that can take place for us. It is what we are called to as we in this church look at our mission statement of responding, restoring, and rejoicing. This is all about bringing healing and wholeness to those we encounter whether they be together with us in worship, in our families, in the community, or much more broadly into the world.

Getting back to the words of blessing from scripture...it hardly seems like blessing. ³“You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. ⁴“You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. What kind of blessing is that. Blessed? It doesn't feel like blessing.

Now, if I were to read the rest of the blessings to you from say the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, the next verses would seem even harsher, but taken from The Message as we heard it read helps us to see where God truly is and why this is blessing. You can go back to verses three and four to read how those things are blessings, but to continue at verse five...

⁵“You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.

⁶“You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.

⁷“You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.

⁸“You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.

⁹“You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.

¹⁰“You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.²

² Ibid.

It becomes what it always has been about...relationship...first of all with God and then relationship with each other.

First relationship with God. We know from this scripture and so many more that God is with those who suffer. When you ask, "Where is God in this?" Look to those who are suffering. God's heart is for those who are in need. Jesus came to those who were suffering. He healed them. He taught them. And then he said to those who would listen then and now, continue my work. Continue to be with those who are suffering, those in need, those whose hearts, minds, and/or bodies are broken. And do more if you can. Do something if it will bring the kingdom of God on earth.

The world has always had suffering, but there are people who have made a difference. Think of the Civil Rights movement in the US, or Apartheid in South Africa, or the Suffragettes who fought for the right of women to vote. Peaceful protests that often turned ugly when the power of the government came down to bear on them.

Today we hear people say that those who have been arrested, injured, or shot dead should not have gotten in the way. But when harm is being done to those who have no voice and no power, peaceful protest has always been the way of people and God's people in particular. We are not called to sit in our comfortable spaces in the face of injustice. We are called to action.

In the words of the prophet Micah of the Old Testament, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."³

This is what we are called to, which is what the last verses of the scripture on blessing talks about as it says...

"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble."⁴

My prophets and witnesses have always gotten in this kind of trouble. And Micah again, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."⁵

So, we are blessed...blessed to be agents of God in the world. Blessed to know God in our lives. Blessed to have God living and working in and through us to bring the kingdom

³ Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by [Biblica, Inc.](#)® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁴ The Message. Eugene Peterson.

⁵ NRSV.

of heaven on earth. We are blessed when we care for those who need to be lifted up. We are blessed when we recognize God's provision and presence. We are blessed when we know to our core that we are loved by God and never alone.

Does this answer everything? No. But it is about faith, mature faith, courage, love and justice. It is about showing up, speaking up, and doing what we can. It is about responding, restoring, and rejoicing. May God grant us the wisdom, courage, and humility to be salt and light of the world. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Blessed are you, holy God,
for you give release to the captives and food to the hungry.
Bless us as we hunger and thirst for your justice and righteousness.
May all who are needy find their hope in you.

Compassionate God, we thank you for your mercy.
You give pardon for our sin and call us to forgive others.
Embrace with your renewing grace those who are resentful or discouraged.
Help us serve as instruments of reconciliation when discord or conflict arises.

Righteous God, we thank you for your justice.
You watch over all who suffer and empower your people to act for good.
Bless the work of your church and its partners
to advocate for justice and dignity in our communities and in your world.
Keep safe all who live under threat of violence or struggle for life's necessities.

Caring God, we thank you for your comfort.
You strengthen us when we are weak and pick us up when we fall.
Bless us as we support and care for one another in this community.
Surround all who mourn with the warmth of your love and the light of our hope
in Christ Jesus.

God of new life, we give you thanks for your enlivening Spirit.
You give courage to the persecuted and inspire the weary.
Bless us as we strive to make a difference as a community in Christ's name.
Unite your Church by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and strengthen our common witness with the gifts you offer us through Jesus Christ.

And now we gather our prayers into one voice and pray as Jesus taught:

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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

With what shall we come before the Lord this day?
We come with a love of justice and a passion for sharing Christ's love.
Let us walk in humble gratitude, offering to God a portion of the gifts
that God freely shares with us, gifts for the healing of the world.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 1 © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press. Page 59

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Hymn

Blest Are They

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1. Blest are they, the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of God. Blest are they, full of sorrow; they shall be consoled. <i>(Refrain)</i>	<i>Refrain: Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you; holy are you! Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the Kingdom of God!</i>
2. Blest are they, the lowly ones; they shall inherit the earth. Blest are they, who hunger and thirst; they shall have their fill. <i>(Refrain)</i>	3. Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs. Blest are they, the pure of heart; they shall see God! <i>(Refrain)</i>
4. Blest are they who seek peace; They are the children of God. Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs. <i>(Refrain)</i>	5. Blest are you who suffer hate all because of me. Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom, shine for all to see. <i>(Refrain)</i>

"Blest are they." Words from Matthew 5:3-12; paraphrased by David R. Haas. ©1985 GIA Publications, Inc.
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Benediction

Our God is a God of blessing.
Our God is a God of love and justice.
Our God is a God of wisdom and truth.
Living and loving in that spirit, we will not be moved.

[Worship Elements: January 29, 2023](#)

May the grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy Spirit keep you now and forevermore.

Postlude