



Kensington Presbyterian Church  
*The uncomfortable presence*

March 28, 2021

**WELCOME**, during these times of physical isolation we are putting out these worship services that you can do at home.<sup>1</sup> This doesn't mean you have to do them alone. You can invite those who live with you, or connect with others through the phone or computer, or even in small groups outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca).

*Announcements*

Rev. Peter will be away today and next week. As a result...

Clara Maranzano will be leading worship again.

**Communion:** will be delayed a week to March 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Prayer Group:** as a group, we'll take a break until March 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Pastoral Care:** If you need pastoral care, please contact your elder or the church office.

**Live Worship:** After Montréal is no longer a Red Zone, Session will reconsider when we feel it is safe to open. If you would like the Zoom information, please contact Peter.

*Contacts*

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<sup>1</sup> note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



*Approaching God*



Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Chris est la lumière du monde.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



Call to worship (which is from the PWS&D (Presbyterian World Service and Development) and is being used by congregations across Canada)

L: Onward and ever closer,  
 we move toward Jerusalem.

**P: We are pilgrims on a journey.  
 We are travelers on the road.**

L: In ancient times, pilgrims sang songs as they walked to Jerusalem. Being in God's care, covenant and presence is a blessing.

**P: We are pilgrims on a journey.  
 We are travelers on the road.**

L: Ancient psalms of an ancient people rise in a prayerful hymn to the Lord and redeemer of all life and creation.

**P: We are pilgrims on a journey.  
 We are travelers on the road.**

L: Let us pray.

**All: God of all creation, hear the songs of praise, of lament and of hope that we sing on the journey.  
 Liberate us from fear and cynicism so that we may be caught up in the rhythm of creation and live in tune with**

**your love and hope.**

**In the name of Jesus we pray,**

**Amen.**

♪ Hymn: Creating God, your fingers trace.....pg 7 (288)

🧎 Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Almighty God,

you have set the whirling cosmos in motion  
and called all creatures into being.

All that exists speaks of your majesty,  
yet no detail misses your care and attention.

You know each of us by name,  
and make yourself known to those who seek you.

Your wisdom delights the human heart and purifies the soul.

We gather to enjoy your presence with us,  
and to listen for your Word for our times and our lives.

Merciful God, your presence in Christ fills us with joy and hope.

In him you teach us how to love you and each other,  
writing your law in our hearts.

Yet we confess that we often disconnect our hearts from you.  
We know what to do, but we choose our own path, instead of  
following you.

Forgive us, we pray.

Help us to fully accept your presence in our lives,  
however uncomfortable or challenging it may be sometimes.

Grant us the grace to experience your unconditional love and  
share it with everyone in our midst. Amen.

✦ Assurance of Pardon

Rejoice, brothers and sisters, for our Lord is gracious, slow in  
anger and abounding in love, and in Him we are forgiven.

**Amen.**

🧎 Lord's prayer (feel free to use another version/translation)  
Jesus left us a prayer to guide us into a healthier relations with  
God and each other. Let us join with Christians around the  
world, saying...

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done, on earth as it is 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.**

Hymn: God's law is perfect.....pg 9 (9)



## *Listening to God*

🧎 Prayer<sup>2</sup>

Holy God,

you revealed to the disciples

the everlasting glory of Jesus Christ.

Grant us, who have not seen and yet believe,

the gift of your Holy Spirit,

that we may boldly live the gospel

and shine with your transforming glory

as people changed and changing  
through the redeeming presence of our Savior.  
Amen.

 Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible, or click on the name to be taken to an online version (NRSV).  
Jeremiah 7:1-11  
John 2:13-22

### Sermon: The uncomfortable presence

Dear Lord, please bless these words  
and the meditations of our hearts.<sup>3</sup> Amen.

John 2:13-22

I have a confession to make. When preparing a Sunday service, one of the most challenging aspects for me is to choose the hymns. I am not as familiar with the hymns as many of you are, so it takes time for me to figure out which songs may be meaningfully connected with a certain passage of Scripture. That is why I usually work with the Book of Praise. At the end of this book you find several suggestions for the readings of each Sunday. Imagine, then, my surprise when I found out that there is no suggestion at all for John's text today. What we know as "the cleansing of the Temple" just does not have a hymn attached to it. I found this very intriguing, so I checked the same passage for the other gospels, because all of the evangelists mention Jesus' outburst in the Temple but guess what, no hymns suggested there either. Almost as if these verses did not exist in the lectionary.

Jesus in the Temple is an uncomfortable presence. I mean, in the gospels, we find him often challenging the religious

establishment of his time. From that day, at the beginning of his ministry in Nazareth, when after reading a passage taken from the prophet Isaiah he declares that the Scriptures have been fulfilled, and the men who know them as Joseph's son react violently against him, and even try to stone him, until the events that Mark, Matthew, and Luke place during Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, when he goes to the Temple, like any Jew would do for the Feast of Passover, and not only does he drive out the sellers and overturn the tables of the money changers, but he also teaches. He teaches with such an authority and profound wisdom that every word he says is a challenge for the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, again, those who embody the religious institution. And this growing tension, as we know, will escalate to the point of triggering the dramatic events that will lead Jesus to the cross.

The cleansing of the Temple has been described as a moment of "righteous anger" an emotion that is not stranger to the biblical prophets. Indeed, we may be used to considering a prophet as someone who makes a prediction, who tells the future. But great theologians, like Walter Brueggemann, explain that in essence a prophet is a child of his own tradition who is able to criticize it and, at the same time, to energize the people of that same tradition in a way that reconnects them with the God of freedom, compassion, and justice who is the God of the Bible. So, yes, prophets may often sound angry at the social injustices they perceive in their midst because they remember. They remember what kind of God the people of Israel have and what are the essentials of a good life under the wings of that God. They remember the Law that God has entrusted his people with and how those precepts, those guidelines for a godly life should be kept in their hearts and direct their life together.

We heard some of that in our reading of Jeremiah today. The

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3 Psalm 19:14

prophet who lived in Jerusalem in the times of the first destruction of the temple and the exile of a great portion of the Jewish people in Babylon, centuries before the birth of Christ. And for sure, Jesus had in mind some of Jeremiah's words the day he cleansed the temple, according to Mark, Matthew, and Luke.

None of us, I guess, is immune to that "righteous anger" when we come in the face of social injustice, corrupted systems, and ways of life that foster inequity. The church as an institution has led the way in many countries to denounce those collective evils, and to work for fairer societies. It is part of our prophetic role, indeed.

However today our text comes from the gospel of John who gives us a slightly different focus, I believe.

As you may already know, John is the only one who places this event at the beginning of the gospel. In fact, in John, Jesus seems to visit Jerusalem more than once. So here we have Jesus entering the temple, making a whip of cords, and driving out sheep, cattle, money changers, and sellers. All, out.

Now, we know that these were lawful activities in the Temple. People needed to buy these animals to offer sacrifice to God during the Passover. Pilgrims were coming from far away and they would not be able to bring their own lamb to Jerusalem. In a way, John is telling us that the problem itself was not the "business" that took place in the Temple, but the fact that the Lord being there, they did not stop such activities. Indeed, in the prophetic tradition, a text by Zechariah explains that on the day the Lord comes to Jerusalem, a day when every wrong would be made right by Him, on that day, every trade would stop at the temple. For John, you see, it is crucial from the very beginning to make clear that Jesus is the Lord, and he has authority over all things. Jesus is coming to his Father's house, not to the Temple like any other mortal, for he is not like any other mortal, he is the Christ.

Of course, as we read, the Jewish religious authorities -what John calls simply the Jews-, those who belong to the Jewish religious establishment, well versed in the Scriptures supposedly, asks Jesus for a sign, "*What sign can you show us for doing this?*" in other words, show us your credentials Jesus lest we consider you a complete fool, or a mad man, or worse even, a blasphemer. And of course, Jesus' answer makes no sense to them. Indeed, it does not make sense to anyone until his disciples stand in the presence of the risen Christ.

*"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*

As it is usually the case, between Jesus and the religious establishment there is a gap, a persistent misunderstanding, almost as if they were not speaking the same language. The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders are talking about the stones that make up the magnificent building of Jerusalem Temple that has at its center a sacred chamber, the Holy of Holies, where God himself is supposed to reside.

Jesus, as John tells us, is talking about his body and his resurrection.

Do you see what John is doing here? There is a shift of the divine place, the place where God's presence dwells, the Holy of Holies. From now on, God's presence will not be to be found in a building, as sacred as this may be, but in Jesus Christ himself, so that all who follow him may be able to worship God in spirit and truth, just as he tells the Samaritan woman by the well a couple of chapters later.

A couple of months ago, a woman of faith from a different denomination told me that when the whole pandemic crisis started she had thought that her prayer group would dissolve. Her tradition implies that they need to gather twice a day, every day, in the morning and evening, to pray together, following a

certain order of prayer. This woman is a professor of Old Testament literature, a brilliant lady, but somehow, she feared that since they were not able to meet in person, the prayer group would disband. Now, to her amazement, none of this happened. It took them a little while but they finally organized a daily routine on Zoom, pretty much as we are doing things today, and they continue to pray together following their traditional routine. They are not together, but they are together.

We may not be sharing the building, but we are sharing in Christ's Spirit. And this Holy Spirit does not depend on our being physically together, nor does she depend on the building we are in together. As John will explain in the next chapter of his gospel, like the wind, the Spirit blows where it chooses. And we may add, the Spirit knows not stone walls, nor roaming viruses, nor extreme constraining measures, nor distances long enough to stop her.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, I believe this is very good news. We may not realize it yet, just like the disciples in the Temple did not understand what Jesus was talking about when he referred to his resurrection after three days in the tomb. We may realize it later. But as Christians, we can trust the work of the Spirit. We have seen God at work in Jesus. We have been, and we will be again at the cross on Good Friday; and we have been, and will be again, at the empty tomb on Easter morning.

Jesus was an uncomfortable presence in the Temple, challenging the religious establishment, confronting them with their own contradictions, their own hypocrisy, and shedding light on their own blind spots. Perhaps, the Spirit is also an uncomfortable presence in our own religious institutions, at least from time to time, making herself hear in the words of the most critical members. But in this Lent season, the second one that we live in lockdown, let us be reminded, by God's grace, that the

Spirit is at work in the Temple, cleansing, restoring, giving us profound insights and challenging experiences so that we may later marvel at how God is making, in Christ, once again, all things new. All things new, even our church.

Amen.



## *Responding to God*

♪ Anthem:



Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on **our website**. Just click the '[Donate Now](#)' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow. You can now donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is [Kensington Presbyterian Church](#) and the e-mail address is [info@kensingtonchurch.ca](mailto:info@kensingtonchurch.ca).

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) are also good options.



Prayers of the people<sup>4</sup>

Loving God, to you we lift up our hearts in gratitude and also offer our deepest concerns.

We give you thanks for the promise of spring, the promise of a renewed nature in the perfect cycle of life that you gave your creation. And we pray for all those who work in thought and action to protect your creation and raise awareness about climate change. Give us the courage and the decision to turn systems that exploit the earth into ways of living that respect our planet and the diversity of its life.

<sup>4</sup> Worship Sourcebook J.4.4.1

**(3rd Sunday in Lent)** We pray for the ministry of the Revs. Jon Wyminga and Shannon Bell in the Dakelh communities of the Cariboo region of B.C. as they bring hope in the face of much despair and many deaths in the past year.



### Staying Connected During the Pandemic

Serving Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank, Jordan and Lebanon since 1948, the work of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) in health care, education and food security is essential. When COVID-19 struck, DSPR Director, Dr. Bernard Sabella, knew they needed the support of their friends. DSPR invited partners to attend five webinars to learn and understand the economic and political challenges, and to hear from people working on the ground. Partners were asked to fund the webinars, and International Ministries was one of the first to respond. Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing have supported DSPR since 2011 in their ministry of maintaining human dignity and hope for Palestinian refugees.

### DAILY PRAYERS

**Monday, March 8 (International Women's Day)** We give thanks for Presbyterian World Service & Development projects that work to break barriers to gender equality and empower women to achieve economic independence and improve their well-being.

**Tuesday, March 9** We pray for an end to violence and rights abuses of women and girls, and ask for the willingness to challenge systems that underpin gender inequality and to celebrate women's achievements.

**Wednesday, March 10** We pray for the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and the newly appointed officers of the General Assembly, including the Rev. Mwawi Chilongozi, the first woman to serve as General Secretary of the CCAP General Assembly.

**Thursday, March 11** We pray for Cathy Reid, President of the Women's Missionary Society (WMS), as she meets with WMS groups and members online to study and pray.

**Friday, March 12** We pray for Commander Bonnie Mason, Deputy Director of Chaplaincy Services in the Canadian Armed Forces, who offers spiritual and moral guidance to our military leaders.

**Saturday, March 13** We pray for the Rev. Cheryl Gaver, Presbytery Ministry Animator for the Presbyteries of Ottawa and Seaway-Glengarry in Ont.

We give you thanks for the promise of your presence among us, wherever we may be, gathered in person or virtually. Help us to be receptive to the work of your Spirit as she moves and transforms our communities, in particular during these times of uncertainty and physical distancing. We lift up to you those communities of faith who are struggling to go on. Inspire us to help them, in any way we can.

We give you thanks, Lord, for the promise of a life that does not end on the cross; our life in Christ, that empowers us to trust You beyond all that this world can throw at us: turmoil, disease, anxiety. Keep us in the awareness of your love and might, that in trusting you, we may welcome your uncomfortable presence when you challenge us to new growth and understanding in our daily lives and in the church.

Now in the silence of our hearts we hold up to you our personal concerns...  
All this we pray in Jesus Christ's name, our Lord.  
Amen.

♪ Hymn: May the God of hope go with us every day.....pg 8 (726)

### ✦ Benediction

*May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ  
Shine in our hearts, transform our lives,  
and brighten the world.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
rest upon you always.  
Amen.*



Creating God, your fingers trace

Unison

G Gmaj7 Am Cmaj7 6 Dsus4 - 3 /C

1. Cre - at - ing God, your fin - gers trace  
 2. Sus - tain - ing God, your hands up - hold  
 3. Re - deem - ing God, your arms em - brace  
 4. In - dwell - ing God, your gos - pel claims

G/B Em 7 Am7 D7sus G

the bold de - signs of far - thest space;  
 earth's mys - teries known or yet un - told;  
 all now des - pised for creed or race;  
 one fa - mi - ly with count - less names;

G7 C Am7 D7sus B Em 7 Am Bm

let sun and moon and stars and light and what lies  
 let wa - ter's frag - ile blend with air, en - a - bling  
 let peace, de - scend - ing like a dove, make known on  
 let eve - ry life be touched by grace un - til we

1-3. C Am7 Dsus4 - 3 C C/D Gsus2 - 3

hid - den praise your might.  
 life, pro - claim your care.  
 earth your heal - ing love. praise you face to face.

Words: Jeffery W. Rowthorn (1934-), alt Music: William Davies (1921-)

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# 726 May the God of hope go with us every day

CANTO DE ESPERANZA 11 11 11 11 with refrain (7 7 7)

May the God of hope go with us eve - ry day, fill - ing all our  
 Dios de la es - pe - ran - za, da - nos go - zo y paz! al mun - do en  
 Que le Dieu de l'es - pé - ran - ce é - claire nos jours rem - plis - sant nos

G G6 Am/G D7

Pray - ing, let us work for peace, sing - ing,  
 O - re - mos por la paz. Can - te -  
 Pri - ons, oeu - vrons pour la paix; chan - tons,

G Am Am7 D7

lives with love and joy and peace. May the God of jus - tice speed us  
 cri - sis, ha - bla tu ver - dad, Dios de la jus - ti - cia, mán - da -  
 vi - es de sa joie, sa paix. Que le Dieu de la jus - tice et

C/G G G G6

share our joy with all. work - ing for a  
 mos de tu a - mor. lu - che - mos  
 le coeur plein de joie; vi - vons le roy -

C/G G G

on our way, bring - ing light and hope to eve - ry land and race.  
 nos tu luz, luz y es - pe - ran - za en la os - cu - ri - dad.  
 de l'a - mour nous mon - tre le che - min de la vé - ri - té.

Am/G D7 C/G G

world that's new, faith - ful when we hear Christ's call.  
 por la paz, fie - les a Ti, Se - ñor.  
 aume de Dieu, soy - ons fi - dèles à sa voix.

Am D7 C/G G

Words: Alvin Schutmaat (1921–1988); French translation, Andrew Donaldson (1951–) Music: Hispanic folk song Words: French translation, copyright © The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1996 Music: public domain

Psalm 19  
God's law is perfect

1. God's law is per - fect and con - verts the  
 2. The stat - utes of the Lord are right and  
 3. Un - spot - red is the fear of God and  
 4. They more than gold, yea much fine gold, to  
 5. More - o - ver, they thy ser - vants warn how

soul in sin that lies: God's tes - ti - mo - ny  
 do re - joice the heart: the Lord's com - mand is  
 ev - er doth en - dure: the judge - ments of the  
 be de - si - red are than hon - ey, hon - ey  
 they their life should frame: a great re - ward pro -

is most sure and makes the sim - ple wise.  
 pure, and doth light to the eyes im - part.  
 Lord are true to - geth - er, right and sure.  
 from the comb that drop - peth, sweet - er far.  
 vid - ed is for them that keep the same.

Words: Psalm 19; paraphrase, Scottish Psalter 1650, alt Music: William Tans'ur's New harmony  
 of Zion 1764 *Words: public domain Music: public domain*