

Kensington Presbyterion Church Growing in Faith and sharing God's Love since 1786

Babel - bad or good? May 7, 2023

WELCOME to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship n person (with singing & snacks), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.¹ If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.cg)



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note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.

Announcements

Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site

Communion this week: All who want to know our Lord better are invited to join us the Lord's Supper. If you are celebrating from home you will have to provide your own elements.

NEW Zoom Prayer Group: Thursday at 6:30 a.m. You may use the worship login details <u>us04web.zoom.us/i/773730107?</u> <u>pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09</u> or phone: 438-809-7799 Meeting ID: 773 730 107 Password: 7864826

Choir: would like you to join them. We practice Sunday at 9:30.

Jesus & Java: Join us as we share the joys and questions of faith. Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton

Pizza & Movie Nights: Fridays at 6:30 May 12: Finding Nemo Please let Rev. Peter know if you want to come.

Drop Box: Food donations are welcome for the local Food Pantry.

Exploring AI: online Wednesday May 31st 4:00 PM - 5:30 Join the Faith & Life Sciences Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches for the first of a series of webinars. <u>www.eventbrite.ca/e/is-intelligence-enough-exploring-human-andartificial-intelligence-tickets-619849746277</u>

Interfaith EcoAction Day: Monday, May 22, 10 am - 1 pm, at Parc Monseigneur J. A. Richard www.eventbrite.ca/e/11th-interfaith-ecoaction-day-journeeinterconfessionelle-ecoaction-tickets-617721931927



Approaching God

Lighting of the Christ Candle Jésus Christ est la lumière du monde. Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

\bigcirc Call to worship²

Let us worship God, our light and our salvation. **The Lord is the stronghold of our lives.** We want to sit at the Lord's table, **together with people from all nations.**

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth. Teach us your ways as we journey in this hour - and always.



liturgical table - Jan Richardson

↓ Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell......pg 11 (65) www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xM6Ke4IKJM www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXX_3nWbpTc (just piano)

Prayer of Approach

O Christ

tirelessly you seek out those who are looking for you and who think that you are far away;

teach us, at every moment,

to place our spirits in your hands.

While we are still looking for you,

already you have found us.

However poor our prayer,

you hear us far more than we can imagine or believe. Amen.³



Listening to God

↓ Hymn: Living for Jesus......pg 12 <u>www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTvaHOI0Hwc</u> <u>www.youtube.com/watch?v=VojvpLBO1JM</u> (perkier)

Let Prayer for Illumination

Lord God, Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit, that we may recognize and follow Jesus in living your way.

Amen.

² adapted from Psalm 27 & John 4:23

³ by Brother Roger of Taizé. The book of a thousand prayers #13

🗼 Intro to the readings

- Our main reading is the Tower of Babel. Personally I hadn't spend much time with it since Sunday School (until this week). What do you notice now? What questions does it leave you with?
- The lectionary pairs it up with a passage from Romans. This is a snippit of Paul's latest letter Can you see why they're connected?
- Our psalm also provides a counterpoint, or perhaps harmony, with the Tower.



Tower of Babel - Pieter Bruegel

Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,⁴ or click on the name to be taken to an online version. <u>Genesis 11</u>: 1-9

<u>Romans 8</u>: 14-17 <u>Psalm 106</u>: 1-10, 47-48

Sermon: Babel: bad or good? Dear Lord, please bless these words and the meditations of our hearts.⁵ Amen.

How was it hearing about the Tower of Babel again? Is it as you remember? What do you think of the people? What do you think of God? What's the point?

There isn't much detail in these nine verses, which leaves it rather open to interpretation.

This week and next I'll be using a Bible commentary of voices from the Global South speaking on some key passages⁶ - this was one of them. The different interpretations are interesting.

The commentator from Sudan was a little like what I learned when I was young. You could call it 'Pride and Punishment'. Basically, God is challenged by people's desire to build to the heavens - and so the people are punished for their arrogant attempt to be like God.

There are some good aspects to this interpretation. The people are afraid they will be forgotten, and so they want to make a name for themselves. While not mentioned, they may also want to protect themselves from the wilderness - a common reason for building cities in the ancient world. Neither of these are aspects that people should worry about. Their value and well-being are for God to look after - as seen in the next story about Abram and

⁴ If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963 or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV

⁵ Psalm 19:14

⁶ Return to Babel ed by John & Priscilla Levison

Sarai who follow God and birth the nation of Israel.

As a kid, I just remembered this story as a lesson in 'don't challenge God', which is good. This refinement of don't seek your own fame, and trust God to look after you is also a good reminder for us. It doesn't matter if you're starting out and wondering what to do with your life, or looking back and wondering if you'll be remembered. Leave that part to God. Focus on being open to God.

Though, with this interpretation, do you want to? The portrayal of God as one who is feeling threatened by people and responds by punishing them... may not be a god you want to have anything to do with. That's a dangerous aspect that can come out of this. Is our God one who is afraid of us? threatened by us? who scatters us to try and prevent us from coming together?

No. That isn't the God we know from the rest of the Bible, so we shouldn't let it be true here either - and we should consider other interpretations.



creation NDG graffiti

Another common perspective of this passage is that it's Anti-Empire. This was a big part in commentaries from Ecuador and Taiwan. They point out that Babel is the same word as Babylon. The Babylonians build Ziggurats/towers. As for having one language - it is normal for those in power to force people to adopt the language of power. Ecuador saw this with the Quechua, and then the Spanish. If we see the people in charge



of building the city and tower as an empire built on the backs of the oppressed, as is usually the case, then who would God side with? Look to Jesus. Even when he's with those with power he's advocating for those needing help - those who are suffering.

If this is the case, is it any wonder that when God comes to visit Babel The Lord of lords takes down the society and frees the people.

Free?

It depends on your interpretation. Are the people scattered as punishment, or dispersed as freedom? Are they burdened by different languages, or allowed to speak their own words/language/identity? Those who say that this is a tale of antiempire remind us that it is a blessing to be able to speak your own language and to live where you want.

This interpretation also speaks to us now. There are many modern 'towers' that lead to people being oppressed. The towers can be linked to the lesson from the first interpretation: to try and preserve your name, and to have the power to be safe. There's political leaders trying to secure their place in countries such as: Turkey, Philippians, Syria, Sudan... Russia. There are branches in all religions trying to make their way the only way. In this case the language may be one of liturgy or behaviour. There are economic 'towers' being built at the expense of people and the environment. Would the God we know be supporting the tower builders, or helping build the people up?

What about us?

The last interpretation I'll share today came out of the commentaries from Taiwan and North America. It takes the desire of the people in the story to settle down as one, and what we see in both the Bible and creation.

Is it the desire of God for people to settle down and all be the same?

No.

From the beginning of the Bible almost everyone is on the move. Our lives too are always changing. While you might be living in the same place you were fifty years ago, you are not the same. You are better at some things, and worse at others. Our context has changed too: from our neighbourhood, to the province & country, to our awareness of how to live with the environment and other people. Living lives that are changing is part of God's plan, not building walls to keep things the same.

and being the same is another aspect that is critiqued in this interpretation. The people keep being described 'as one'. Isn't unity supposed to be good? Shouldn't God want that? The previous perspective looked at the cost of unity on people; this one looks in the Bible and the world for God's thoughts on unity. The big story is that God loves diversity. There are many types of people (and none people) working with God in the Bible. Looking at creation - there is a huge amount of diversity. Go for a walk this afternoon and look at the variety of flowers and trees. God created diversity, and it is good.

In the story this is shown by the languages being mixed so that

there is diversity. I came across the idea that Pentecost is an undoing of the punishment at Babel. It's not. First, different languages aren't a punishment. They are a blessing that encourages creativity and helps us to see the world, and God, in different ways. Second, languages are not made one at Pentecost. The diversity is preserved. What happens is that everyone hears the joy of the Good News in their own language - in the way that they can relate to it. God isn't limited by difference.

I could go on for a while with examples where language or other differences are pushed down, but I suspect you can come up with your own examples.



Embrace 23 - C Aust

I appreciate the simplicity of the 'Pride and Punishment' interpretation - though I think parts of it don't line up with the rest of the Bible or experience. The biggest part is that God reacts out of fear of people. Based on the rest of the Bible, experiences

Rev. Peter Rombeek for Kensington Presbyterian Church I've heard and read, and my own - God always acts out of love (even if we don't understand it).

I can see why the anti-empire interpretation is strong in places that have been conquered by others. I appreciate the reminder that we too are being conquered and oppressed in less obvious ways - and that we might also be conquers/oppressors. This comes with the reminder that God works with, and for, the oppressed.

For me, the most relevant interpretation of the Tower of Babel is the last one. It acknowledges our desires for a life on our own terms, but that life is always changing - and that difference is a blessing. These aspects of life are challenging for us individually, and as a society. Still, change and diversity are God's creation -God's plan.

Which interpretation challenges you? encourages you? What are you going to do?

To God be all the glory

Amen.



Responding to God

J Hymn: All my hope on God is founded......pg.13 (462) <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2oYTtyBSxk</u>

FaithTalk: These are some questions for you to discuss with somebody... or many somebodies. Do what you feel safe (and practice stretching a little).

Memories: What would you have said about the Tower of Babel story yesterday? What would you say now?

Values: Thinking of your community - what do you appreciate about diversity? what do you find

challenging?

Wonder: How can Kensington include more of God's diversity?

Actions: Write a letter to a 'tower' that is oppressing people. Perhaps a government oppressing freedom (consider Amnesty International <u>www.amnesty.ca</u>), or a corporation that doesn't respect people/environment (ex. <u>www.ethicalconsumer.org</u>)

Prayer: ...that we, individually and as a society, will look to God for our value and safety

🔸 Spirit Sighting

This week, we increased our praying together - and there's a difference. At Jesus and Java we started a time when anyone could pray - and the presence of God's Spirit was wonderful.

We also started our new Zoom prayer group. It's both fairly quick, and over Zoom. Among other topics, we prayed for Kensington - including the Friday Family Food & Film night. We were expecting around 6 people this week (about half the normal number) - and no families other than mine. Instead we had 17 people... including two families!

The Holy Spirit is working in our midst.

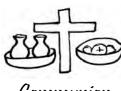
Offering

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.

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





Communion

✤ Invitation to the table

As Paul reminded us in today's passage from Romans, we are adopted by God. We are all children of God. And all of God's children are welcome to the Lord's table.

And this isn't a parent who sits on the porch and watches, God comes down. The Babel story reminds us of that - and the previous hymn even more so.

C'est la volonté de Dieu que tous ceux qui veulent connaître Jésus devraient partager ce repas.

So, come, you who have much faith, and you who would like to have more, you who have come often and you who have not joined for a while, you who try to follow and you who wander. Everyone who wants to know God better is welcome to the Lord's table. As we come together to share the Lord's Supper, we also come together with a statement of faith that we share with Christians of many types, around the world and through the centuries.

Q Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate. was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints. the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen. Foreat prayer of thanksgiving The Lord be with you. and also with you. Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give God thanks and praise. You are amazing God! Some of us would be happy to just create one thing, but you keep going producing more diversity than we can imagine. and such variety within each theme. Every member of the family is unique. and there's even more differences across cultures more ways to learn of your glory.

Now we join with the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

You are amazing Jesus! Some of us would be content to just settle down and pray for no changes, but you keep going always spreading out so that everyone can share your love. and so many need to know they are valued and can find safety in you.

...even us.

Please forgive us when we build towers, or support those who do. For when we try to make a name for ourselves, rather than serving others. For when we sacrifice others for our own well-being. Please forgive us...

and help us to come together and remember the mystery of the faith

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Thank you for the amazing reality that we don't need a tower to reach you.

Come, Holy Spirit, witness to us also in our many languages.

Speak in the language of our need. Let us hear how our deepest hungers, desires, and aspirations can be fulfilled by your goodness.

Speak in the language of our fear. Let us hear how our worries about the future, about each other, and about ourselves, can find rest in your care.

Speak in the language of our gratitude. Let us hear how our honest thanks relates us, not only to those with whom we live, but also to you, the Lord and Giver of life, and, indeed, to the whole world.

Speak to us in the language of hope. Let us hear how our deepest yearning and our expectations are not just wishful thinking,

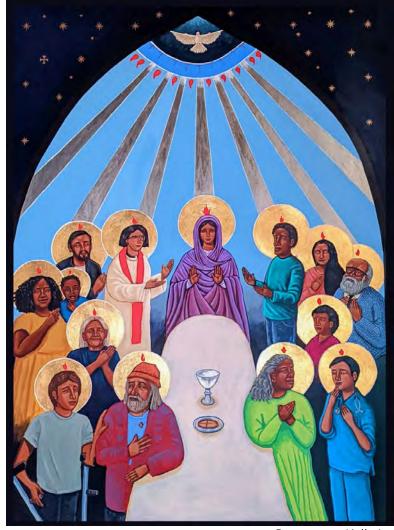
Rev. Peter Rombeek for Kensington Presbyterian Church but responses to your promise.⁷

Speak to our hearts that we will know that we are your children, that we are precious in your sight and welcome at your table.

We pray that as we share your bread and your cup. your will make them alive so that we may be closer to you and be strengthened by you until you come again.

As we prepare to taste your story of good news, let us once again speak the words Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

Lord's Prayer (feel free to use another version/translation) Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, vour 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.



Pentecost - Kelly Latimore

Words of Institution

On the night before he met with death, Jesus took bread, and

after giving thanks to God

- he broke the bread and shared it, saying
 - "This is my body; it is broken for you."

"Ceci est mon corps, qui est rompu pour vous"

⁷ This section was by Tyler Mayfield, <u>https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/day-of-pentecost-3/commentary-on-genesis-111-9-2</u>

[take and eat]

In the same way, he took the cup of wine after dinner and said, "This is the new relationship with God, sealed in my blood

Take this, all of you, in remembrance of me."

"Cette coupe est la nouvelle alliance en mon saunt; faites ceci en mémoire de moi"

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. [take and drink]

Prayer after Communion

Loving God,

you graciously feed us

now and through your Spirit.

Jésus, il n'y a rien qui puisse te séparer de nous.

and we thank you for bringing us together, with all our differences, through your Word and your table.

Through you, we are saved.

Vous êtes ici maintenant avec espoir et amour. Help us to share your love with all the world.

In Jesus name

Amen.

J Hymn: Siyahamba......pg 11 (639) www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQwmjLjoPKQ

🕈 Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you Amen.



Sunday, May 7 -

MISSION MOMENT

In Guatemala, Amalia López Pérez de Coronado is a member of a women's group that engages in discussions about oppression, marginalization and violence against women. With the support of Presbyterian World Service & Development and local partner, AMMID, the group hosts workshops that promote women's empowerment by teaching women about their rights, including their right to participate in decision-making structures at both the community and municipal levels. Through these workshops, Amalia has gained a sense of confidence that has allowed her to participate fully and freely in many different organizations. She's also inspired other women in her community to do the same.



Expressing her gratitude for the organizations that make these initiatives possible, Amalia affirmed, "I am grateful to AMMID for supporting women."

DAILY PRAYERS

Sunday, May 7 We give thanks for the hope and empowerment that Presbyterian World Service & Development and its partners bring to women in Guatemala.

Monday, May 8 We pray for the people, ministries and mission of the Presbytery of Lindsay-Peterborough in Ontario.

Tuesday, May 9 We pray for the members and work of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.

Wednesday, May 10 We pray for God's healing love for those overcoming leprosy and tuberculosis at the Shining Hospital in Nepal, supported by the church through Presbyterian World Service & Development.

Thursday, May 11 We pray for the people, ministries and mission of the Presbytery of Pickering in Ontario.

Friday, May 12 We pray for the members and work of the Committee on History.

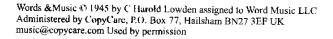
Saturday, May 13 We celebrate and thank God for all the students graduating from the PCC's theological colleges this May. We pray for God's guidance as they discern their futures and embark on their next steps in ministry. 023



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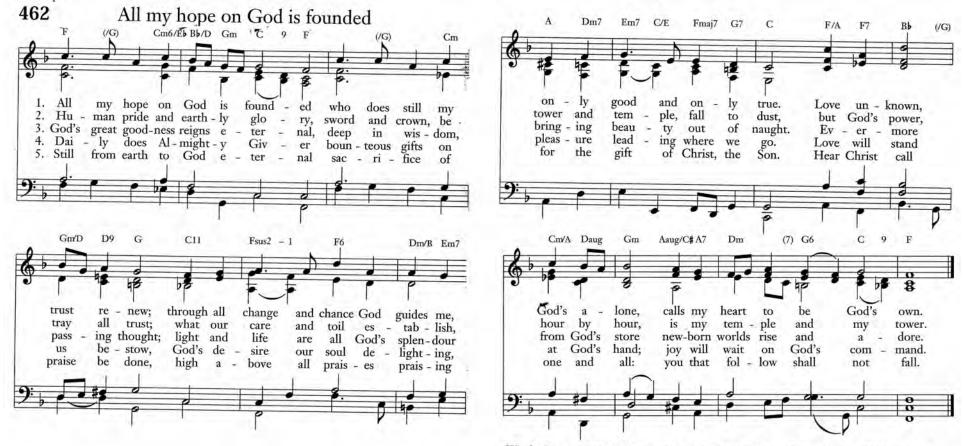
2 Living for Jesus who died in my place, Bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace; Such love constrains me to answer His call, Follow His leading and give Him my all.

3 Living for Jesus wherever I am, Doing each duty in His Holy Name; Willing to suffer affliction or loss, Deeming each trial a part of my cross.

4 Living for Jesus through earth's little while, My dcarest treasure, the light of His smile; Seeking the lost ones He died to redecm, Bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Thomas O Chisholm

Rev. Peter Rombeek for Kensington Presbyterian Church



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Bsus4 - 3

he poured out his soul; and with me dine;

giv - en for you;

I shed for you,