

Kensington Presbyterian Church

Growing in Faith and Sharing God's Love since 1786

Navigating Change

August 13, 2023

Welcome to worship! We offer a variety of ways for people to gather. We welcome everyone to worship in person (with singing!), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this paper/digital outline. No matter how you worship, you are not alone! You are always welcome to be part of our community of faith, and you are also welcome to invite others to join you or to connect with the community!

If you have prayer requests, suggestions to add something new, or you just want to talk, you can always reach out to your elder or if you have a pastoral care emergency, you can contact the Rev. Susan Brasier at (514) 842-3431 who is filling in for Rev. Peter as he enjoys a vacation with his family.

After August 15th, the Rev. Sarina Meyer is taking on emergency pastoral care. She can be contacted at (514) 695-1879



Alexander Plant
For Kensington Presbyterian Church

Announcements

Family Fun Day: The Montreal Children's Theatre will be hosting a Family Fun Day on Saturday, August 19th starting at 4 PM. There will be a BBQ and plenty of fun activities! Join us at Leduc Park (*right across the street from the church*). Everyone is welcome and if you would like to volunteer, please contact our Office Admin Sandra Holder.

Jesus & Java: We are continuing to hold Jesus & Java on Thursday, August 17th at 3 PM! Join us as we enjoy a time of fellowship and discussion! We will meet at Beetz Café located at 5914 Sherbrooke St. West.

Zoom Prayer Group and Friday Film & Food: We are pausing both of these for the next few weeks. We'll resume in September.

New Hope Boutique: New Hope is thrilled to be opening their boutique and express their gratitude for our continued support. If you wish to contribute to the boutique, please let New Hope know!

Contacts

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Pastoral Care Emergency: Rev. Susan Brasier | (514) 842-3431

Family Ministries: Antoinette | antoinette@kensingtonchurch.ca

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Approaching God

Lighting of the Christ Candle

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

Call to Worship

Let us give thanks to the Lord!
Let us proclaim what God has done for us.
Let us tell of God's marvellous works!
We will honour God's name with shouts of joy!
The Lord is good to all his creation.
Let us give thanks for all the wonders God has made!

Hymn: We praise you, O God (425)

Prayer of Approach

Loving and mysterious God, you come to us when we least expect it, calling us out of our lives and into your invitation to follow Christ into a new life filled with your grace. We praise you for the many ways you come to us. In moments of fear, you speak with words of reassurance. In moments of doubt, you reach out your hand to hold. In moments of turmoil, you bring calm to the storm. You are faithful to us. **Yet we confess that we still experience fear and doubt, even though you reach out to us with saving grace. You**

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call us to live with courage and perseverance, yet we can give up too easily and shy away from being with you. We remain silent in the face of unfairness. Forgive us for our dependence on fear and self-centredness, and renew our lives through your mercy and grace, as we come together to sing the prayer that Jesus Christ taught his disciples...

The Lord's Prayer

(Please use a version you are comfortable with)

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 Amen

Assurance of Pardon

God offers forgiveness and saving grace to everyone. Accept these gifts for yourselves and offer forgiveness to others in the name of Christ our Lord.



Listening to God

Children's Time

Do you remember a time when you had to move out of your home? Families often have to move houses when parents get a new job or maybe the house is too big or too small and they need to find someplace else that fits just right. Did you ever feel stressed having to get used to a new house? Or worse, when you had to move to a new school?

That happened to me right in the middle of the 8th grade. The 8th grade is the last year of elementary school before moving on to high school. I had to leave the school I knew for 6 years and move to a new city right as I was about to enter high school. Entering high school is almost like a rite of passage, where you go into a higher form of education and social expectations shift as you begin puberty. Saying it was a chaotic and stressful experience was an understatement.

But I was fortunate that I was able to make friends easily enough and got into a few clubs which made me feel comfortable with my new school.

Today's sermon is going to talk about how in chaotic times, God reaches out to us to help us navigate the change that has to happen as we understand where the church is going over the next few years.

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Dear Jesus, thank you for being there for us when we face challenges and difficulties. Guide us through those moments and help us to understand and navigate the changes in our lives. Amen.

Hymn: Word of God, across the ages (497)

Prayer for Illumination

God of wisdom, as we gather to hear your Word this day, calm our spirits and still our minds so that we can receive your message with clarity and respond in faithfulness. Amen.

Intro to the Readings

Psalm 85 reminds us that God is ever present in our lives, radiating his goodness onto us during times of difficulty. It is a great way to remember that God is an excellent guide in our lives. Matthew 14 is the classic story of Jesus walking on the water and Peter trying (and failing) to walk alongside Jesus on the water. We remind ourselves that despite the chaos and fear associated with change, God is ever present and is ready to guide us through that change. All we have to do is reach out and follow.

Readings

Psalm 85:8-13
Matthew 14:22-33

Sermon: Navigating Change

How has your faith been doing lately? Has it been steadily growing as you pray and attend worship? Perhaps you're asking more questions than usual? Or maybe you feel lost and completely confused. It's important to ask this question for yourself and for Kensington. When we reflect on where our faith lies, we open ourselves to understanding the nature of God in our lives. We reflect both personally in the time we spend alone in prayer or meditation and communally when we gather for worship here at Kensington.

The church is the foundational body where we share our faith with one another, just as Jesus shared his ministry with his disciples and the crowds that gathered around him. When we gather together, whether in-person or online, we follow the tradition that Jesus laid before his disciples, which in turn was carried on by them through the establishment of churches throughout the ancient world. One of the extraordinary things about having a community of faith is how God inspires us to grow and adapt to changes in the world around us.

Rather than making us stoic and static beings only living in one mindset, God made us flexible and fluid, allowing us to react and adapt to the changes around us. When the early church encountered persecution in the Roman Empire, it adapted to worship differently than it did when it first started communities. When Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire,

Christians had to adapt and change. Throughout the entire history of the church, there has always been adaptation.

Some changes were more drastic than others. Some changes were harmful to both ourselves and others. But no matter the change, the church adapted itself to fit the role that it sought to fulfil, to be a community of faith worshipping God and living the Gospel in both a practical and a spiritual way. Sometimes change can be frightening. The pandemic forced us to close the building to prevent illness from spreading to vulnerable people.

And just as we are undergoing a period of uncertainty which feels chaotic and confusing, the disciples felt that way even when Jesus was with them. In our Scripture reading in Matthew, Jesus has the disciples go into a boat and sail to the other side of the water. God directs us to move forward as the world grows and moves like waves in the ocean. When the disciples were in the boat, they encountered the battering waves and were thrown into chaos which they felt all around them. We are facing that same storm.

How do we navigate this chaotic change? When attendance numbers are shrinking, and the residual effects of the residential school system and stories of abuse from church leaders challenge the church's reputation. How do we make sense of all this development? Paired with the pandemic forcing us to redefine what worship looks like, it feels like a lot of change happening all at once.

The disciples cried out in fear when they saw Jesus walking on the water, thinking that it was a ghost walking towards them. Their fear, driven by the chaos of the storm, paired with their encounter with something that they had never seen before, must have been overwhelming to them. But when Jesus saw their reaction to his presence, he spoke to them. The passage doesn't say whether the disciples calmed down or if they still felt fear and anxiety about their situation.

What do we do as a congregation when we are faced with storms of controversy or fears of being threatened? How do we react when God inspires people to help navigate that change? When we closed our doors and moved online, how did we react? How do we react now? As we continue to provide the ministry of online worship, what role does that play in the life of the church? We are no longer forced to stay closed. Instead, we have decided to keep that ministry alive because it has value beyond the necessity of maintaining it during lockdown. Ask yourself if 5 years ago you would be open to the idea of incorporating an online ministry into worship.

We moved ourselves away from what we knew worship looked like, and we adapted ourselves to have both in-person and online worship. Much like the Christians going from persecution to state religion, we recognize that the changes around us can be chaotic and frightening. We also know that, like the disciples in the boat, God is with us

during these chaotic times. But sometimes we don't see God's presence right away like the disciples seeing Jesus where they thought he was a Ghost.

Peter's example of walking out onto the water to meet Jesus is where we need to recognize our reactions to change. Sometimes we can navigate the challenges directly, like Peter when he first started on the water. Sometimes our faith in God wavers, causing us to sink. But at the end of the day, God is there, ready to reach out to us to pull us out of the water. When we allow God to work within us, he brings the grace and compassion that we need to navigate that storm.

When we are faced with the challenges that cause doubt within ourselves and the community, we must remember the experience of the disciples, and how they encountered God amongst the chaos. When we are facing shrinking numbers and church closures, we must actively seek God's hand and wisdom. We cannot ignore what is around us, turning inwards and hoping that our human perspective solves the problems facing the church. The disciples were unable to cope with the storm that they were facing.

Remember that some of these disciples were fishermen, experienced on the water. They would have encountered storms before and know exactly how to navigate the waters. But in this passage, they were terrified and cried out in fear, not because of the storm, but because of the ghost they thought they were seeing. But the added

chaos would not have been helpful to their fear and instead would have added to their fear. We too have experience in navigating difficult situations.

It was just over 100 years ago that a massive influenza epidemic spread around the world forcing the closure of churches. Does that sound familiar? Some churches didn't survive the closures. Does that also sound familiar? Both events are extremely similar. Yet, the way we navigated this pandemic was vastly different. Rather than repeating what we did 100 years ago, we decided to use new tools to allow worship to continue. God inspired us to grow and change. We faced the fears of closing communities and isolation by providing us with the means to worship together without having to gather in a building.

Of course, this doesn't mean the end of worshipping in person. It's the opposite. God provides us with new opportunities to transform worship to allow more people to join together. With the invention of radio and television, churches broadcasted their services so people could listen from home. With the invention of the internet, churches had been given a new asset. Every church of any size and financial status could put itself online and minister to people from anywhere.

Much like Jesus extending his hand to Peter, God extends his hand to us. When Peter was doing something that no human had ever done before, it was a frightening experience for him. His faith waivered and he began to

sink. We must acknowledge that in the face of new experiences and technologies, we too can be like Peter and sink in the chaos around us.

But when we take the hand of Jesus, just as Peter did, we can experience God's guiding hand in navigating that change. The storm calmed once Jesus was on the boat. When we let God work in our lives to help us navigate the change, we will emerge on the other side. We might not look the same as we did when we entered the storm, but we must make that journey with the courage and conviction that God inspires us with.

So let us not be afraid of the changes that are happening around us. Let us open ourselves to God and allow our faith to grow in the face of change. Let us not be afraid of the changes that God directs us through, and let us remember that the very nature of faith is to be adaptive and fluid. Let's embrace the compassionate hand of God as we work through what the church is going to look like moving forward. Thanks be to God for our community of faith. Amen.



Responding to God

Hymn: With the Lord as my guide (574)

FaithTalk

These are some questions for you to discuss with someone (or a group of people). Practice some of these throughout the week, and remember to stretch yourself a little and try something new!

Memories: Think about a time where you had to navigate a big change in your life. How did you handle it?

Prayer: Take a moment to reflect on your faith and pray to God in a different way than you normally do. Try having a conversation with God like you would with another person. Sing a song which expresses how you feel.

Actions: Go onto YouTube and watch a church service online. See how other churches use the internet to minister to other people and if you're inspired by something you see, share it with someone at Kensington.

Spirit Sighting

I invite you to think of the way in which we worship as a church and how that form of worship has changed over time. As the Holy Spirit works within Kensington, what are some of the ways in which our ministry transforms lives? When we support outreach groups or when we gather together to support one another, how is Kensington growing as a community? What assets does Kensington have which allows us to worship God faithfully and meaningfully?

Kensington has plenty of assets, from the building to the technology to the people. We have people who are good at doing all sorts of things and sometimes those assets aren't acknowledged or used to help Kensington grow. Think of ways which we can use the assets we have now to enhance what Kensington does in the community.

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 also 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.

Prayers of the People

Compassionate God, you come to us in unforeseen circumstances and through unexpected people. We give you thanks for your kindness in an anxious moment, good news that changed expected outcomes, and signs of hope when things seemed bleak. We pray for all who face upheaval and uncertainty, whatever the cause. Fill our hearts with compassion and understanding for the fearful.

You remind us not to be afraid when troubles arise. We pray for those who struggle with illness or grief, anxiety or depression. We remember those who feel worthless or ashamed, whatever the reason. May they know your peace and strength. Equip us to reach out in every way we can to embody your love in our words and actions.

We pray for all those people crying out for fair treatment, working against racism and discrimination, telling painful stories of their lives. Open our hearts with understanding and motivate us to act for change. Send your Spirit to work in our communities to create mutual respect and new ways to live as neighbours.

Faithful God, we place our trust in you and your purposes. Help us to see your presence in our lives and the lives of others. May you continue to walk with us as we face the challenges ahead both in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. This we pray in your most precious name. Amen.

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Hymn: Take time to be holy (638)

Sending & Benediction

Go forth from this place knowing that God is always there for you. May the peace of God, the compassion of Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, guard your hearts and minds in goodness and righteousness. Amen.

