



Kensington Presbyterian Church  
*Growing in faith and sharing God's love*  
 since 1786

## *What's Heaven like?*

November 19, 2023

**WELCOME**, to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person (with singing), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.<sup>1</sup> If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite those who live with you to join you, or connect with others through the phone or 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).



Bohlig - on the table with bread

### *Contacts*

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<sup>1</sup> 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

**Zoom Prayer Group:** Thursday at 6:30 a.m.

[us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09)

[pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09)

**Jesus & Java:** Join us as we share the joys and questions of faith.

Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton

**Family Food & Film Fiestas:** Fridays at 6:30 for pizza

**Home Alone.** This is a good opportunity to invite someone.

Please let Peter know so we have enough food.

**Drop Box:** Food donations are welcome for the local Food Pantry, diapers for young mothers through Head & Hands, and cloths & accessories for the New Hope Boutique.

**'Seniors' & Students:** If you're over 55 you can help Concordia students and have some fun. All activities are **free** and at the church

Monday Nov. 27th

3-4 pm Carnival games

4:10-5:10pm Light fitness

Monday Dec. 4th

3-4 pm Painting a burst of summer

4:10-5:10pm Volleyball with a beach ball

**Ethnic mistreatment:** Sunday, Dec 3 at 3 pm - online

The 2023 General Assembly adopted a Confession regarding the ways in which The Presbyterian Church in Canada has silenced, mistreated and slandered the "ethnic contingent" of the church. As part of this a Worship Service of Repentance, Healing and Hope will be held. You can join online [timothyperc.com/repentance](https://timothyperc.com/repentance)

**Advent & Christmas:** see page 11 (last page).



## 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

We gather in this time to be with you;

**so that our relationship will grow.**

Our voices we join together

**to praise your amazing generosity.**

Our souls we open together

**to hear your words to us.**

Our eyes we turn towards you;

**to see signs of your Kingdom come.**

♪ Hymn: How firm a foundation.....pg 9 (685)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA4bTqCjLQw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA4bTqCjLQw)



Jewish Museum - Rombeek



Prayer of Approach<sup>2</sup>

Everything we have received

**was given by God**

Everything we enjoy

**comes from God**

Everything we pray for

**will be answered by God.**

God of life,

you are the source of all goodness

et la réponse à tous nos désirs.

Our understanding of you is small;

increase it.

Our desire to do your will is weak;

enliven it.

The seed you have planted has yet to bear fruit;

ripen it.

Mais avant tout, crée en nous des cœurs purs

as, on you, we unburden ourselves

of guilt,

of fear,

of pride,

of hardness of heart,

of weakness of intentions.

Jesus, Son of God,

**Have mercy on us.**


Jesus, Saviour of the World,

**Make peace within us.**

<sup>2</sup> adapted from *Wee Worship Book* 5<sup>th</sup> ed pg 52.

Christ, King of Glory,  
**Be with us and for us  
until your kingdom comes.**

As we wait, help us to live the prayer you teach your followers:

 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

Hear the good news  
The Lord knows all that is hidden,  
and won't be shocked by what we say.  
To all who turn from sin in sorrow,  
God's love and healing will come.

Amen.



## *Listening to God*


 Hymn Sing

This is a time when we sing several hymn requests. You can join in on YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_EPsf2FuWoeen7j1iGcz\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_EPsf2FuWoeen7j1iGcz_w)



 Prayer for Illumination


Lord, open our hearts and minds  
through the power of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may be able to recognize you.  
Amen.

 Intro to the readings

The first passage is from Matthew. It is part of a whole series of parables that start, "*The Kingdom of Heaven is like...*". Before this is one about somebody planting weeds in with the wheat, and it being left until the harvest - then the weeds are burned. After this are some comparing Heaven to a treasure hidden in a field. One of the ones we'll hear is about bread. Curiously, in the next chapter Jesus feeds over 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish... and then twelve baskets are filled with the left-overs.

Our Psalm acknowledges that it's not always easy to live in a good way - but there is help around.



 Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,<sup>3</sup> or click on the name to be taken to an online version.

[Matthew 13: 31-33](#)

[Psalm 141](#)

 Sermon: What's Heaven like?

*Dear Lord, please bless these words  
and the meditations of our hearts. Amen.*

Imagine you're having coffee with a friend, or out for a walk, and they say, 'So, you go to church. What's Heaven like?'

What would you say?

Would you describe the vision in Revelation? "*The city wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass.* <sup>19</sup>The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; .... <sup>21</sup>And

<sup>3</sup> 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

*the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass."*<sup>4</sup>

I remember when I was a child somebody saying he thought Heaven would have rolling hills and steam trains - because he liked steam trains. Others describe Heaven as a place where they will meet their loved ones.

How would you describe Heaven?

All of these describe Heaven as something that we can't connect with now, but hopefully after we die - or at the end of this world. There are Biblical reasons to talk of Heaven that way.

...and there's passages like today's.

Heaven is like a mustard seed that is planted in a field, or yeast that is hidden in the flower. This is a very different image from streets of gold.

So, what can we say about Heaven?

It is in ordinary everyday things. In Jesus' day bread was baked everyday. Mustard grew.

Not only is Heaven in the ordinary, but it's accessible. This isn't bread made for the King, baked in the royal oven with special imported ingredients. This is ordinary bread. The same with the mustard seed - this isn't a rare flower, or one that needs a lot of special care. It grows naturally there (and here). Bread and mustard are things people had access to.

One commentator I read this week (Amy-Jill Levine) challenged a number of traditional ways of interpreting these two parables. One of the most popular is how these parables would have shocked the initial audience.

You've probably heard sermons that talk about mustard as a weed or invasive species that the farmer doesn't want. Or of the leaven in the bread as something that would make the audience think of it as unclean. Comparing Heaven to a nasty weed or something that makes food unclean would be shocking - but it's not here. These parables aren't about Heaven as a challenge to the current system. While God frequently challenges how people live, it isn't in these parables. Mustard was thought of by Jews and Romans as a nice flavour to add to food, and as an important health supplement. Jesus does talk about bad weeds being planted in the previous parable, but not in this one. For the bread, it's true that leavened bread was bad for Jews - but only for the week of Passover. The rest of the year they ate bread like everyone else.

It's not that plants and leaven can't be bad, it just doesn't seem to be happening here. Jesus is often about motives, but we can't tell the motives of the seed or leaven. We can see what happens - the actions - and it's amazing.

Everyone with a small amount of gardening experience knows that from small seeds come big plants - but here is a plant that provides a home for the "birds of the air". We don't know who the birds are supposed to represent, but we do know that this is more than one, and they have a home.

Do you remember how much 3 portions of flour is? It probably came up in previous sermons on this parable, and in the story of Abraham greeting the three strangers. It's not 3 cups. This isn't a bun she's got in the oven. Three Portions is about 40-60 pounds of flour - enough to feed a hundred people. This is either a ridiculous amount, perhaps Jesus being funny, or an amount that is so generous that everyone can have some ...or both.

Perhaps the point isn't that Heaven is like small things that can

produce big results - but is like something unseen will produce amazing generosity?

Now, if Heaven is something that's hidden around us and produces amazing generosity - such as meeting people's need for a home and daily bread... why don't we see it?

In both parables, the plant and the bread take time to grow. At first you don't notice anything. Then you can start to see a change - especially if you carry on with life and then look back. Regardless, growth is happening.

But doesn't this push Heaven off until the end of things, like the New Jerusalem with streets of gold? Not quite, because it is here now - and there are signs - such as amazing generosity. It's not always visible, but it is here.

Where do you see this sign of Heaven - generosity?



feeding 5000 - Annie Vallotton

Often when we talk about generosity we talk about financial giving. This is one form. Regular offering given to the church is generous (and necessary) for our ongoing ministry. This year we



were blessed with generous bequests from Ken and Lesley. And financial generosity isn't limited to churches - there's generous support of shelters and food banks, schools and medical research, ...and other places. All of these are generous - and this is not all.

There is generosity with time. This week we had a Session meeting in which several of you gave their evening to helping God's Spirit grow the vision of being a "Christian community committed to growing in faith and sharing God's gifts of love, hope, and healing."<sup>5</sup> This morning we have people volunteering their time to help worship happen - from welcoming as ushers, working the tech, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, and providing hospitality after to further connect our community. Many of you volunteer outside the church as well. This is excellent (note: the parables are not set in a religious context.) There are those of you who generously give of your time in more personal ways - connecting with others and seeing how they are doing.

And being with others can be generous in more ways than just time. We can be generous in how we are present with them. How much do you put forth your opinion in the expectation that you are right, and how much do you listen? Listening without trying to convert the other can open you to seeing God's world, and perhaps Heaven, in a new way. This is generous. That said, simply listening isn't generous. Consider the other perspective, and what is hidden in it. You also need to honestly share your perspective as well. Balancing honest sharing with listening gives witness to amazing generosity that can happen anywhere and anytime. It can lead to growth in you, and your conversation partner - though relationships often need time to be nurtured into readiness. This opening of yourself to difference, and being honest, is amazing generosity.

These, and others, are ways we can see amazing generosity -

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5 [kensingtonchurch.ca/about/mission-statement/](http://kensingtonchurch.ca/about/mission-statement/)

which these parables tell us part of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.

Does it have to be big? No and yes. I'm reminded of when Jesus sees the widow place her coin in the collection box. She puts in less than everyone else, yet is lifted as an example of generosity. Why? She doesn't give out of her left-overs. She gives out of what God has provided her - with the faith that God will continue to provide. Perhaps she remembers the stories of daily bread given as the Israelites travelled through the desert, or the blessing the strangers gave Abraham and Sarah a child. Perhaps she heard Jesus talk about how God's kingdom may be unseen, but will have lots of space to live & lots of food to eat - more than is needed.



So, your friend turns to you and asks what Heaven is supposed to be like?

You can talk about streets of Gold, that's in the Bible. Heaven is like something amazingly beautiful and precious. But don't overlook the common place; don't forget that it is here, now in unseen places. ... and that there are signs of the amazing ridiculous generosity to come.

*To God be all the glory  
Amen.*



## Responding to God

♪ Hymn: Guide us O thou great redeemer.....pg 10 (651)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAN4EojeFOY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAN4EojeFOY)

💬 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: Share descriptions of Heaven have you heard - from the Bible or otherwise.

Wonder: Wonder together what Heaven is like?

Values: If a sign of Heaven is generosity, where do you see Heaven growing/rising?

Wonder: What is an analogy for Heaven that shows it being unseen in our city lifestyle, and yet can grow to provide abundantly?

Actions: Practice describing to each other how you would answer a friend asking about heaven.

Prayer: ...that we will see God's Kingdom coming in our lives.

## ✦ Spirit Sightings

The Holy Spirit speaks to us directly (though often not with words), and through others, and through the Bible. Considering how long ago it was written, it's amazing we still find it relevant to our lives. To help, the Bible is being translated into more and more languages.



The daily prayer listing in this bulletin includes a highlight on the work of the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean and the Rev. Manias

Chang Yu-fa. In 2012 they started translating the Bible into Bunun - one of the Indigenous languages in Taiwan. It was finished last March. This was one many projects our Presbyterians Sharing money supported.

The Holy Spirit helped with their translation, and will continue to help people interpret the words they can now read.

## ✦ Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website**: [kensingtonchurch.ca](http://kensingtonchurch.ca). 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](mailto:info@kensingtonchurch.ca).

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

Water from the Rock - Virginia Hayes

## 🧎 Prayers of the people

Jesus, we come to because you came to us;  
we love you because you love us.

May your Kingdom grow faster in places where people need homes, like the 'birds of the air' looking for a nesting place.

We pray for those whose homes are unsafe, ...

for those living in conflict zones...

for those who can't afford a home...

and for those who have had to leave their homes...

May your Kingdom rise faster

in places where people need daily bread...

Finding a home and food can be a burden that stifles growth,  
and there are other burdens as well.

We pray for those who are in need of healing,  
whether physical...  
mental...  
emotional...  
or spiritual...

May they receive your healing,  
and their families as well.

You share that the Kingdom of Heaven is growing in common  
things, like a seed that grows - or an idea.

May your Spirit plant ideas in our souls,  
that will grow your love, hope & healing  
your Kingdom  
to such a ridiculously amazing generous extent  
that everyone will see.

In Jesus name  
**Amen.**

🎵 Hymn: Seek ye first.....pg 8 (625)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMQfOp9w8k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMQfOp9w8k)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVTZ9DmnXvM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVTZ9DmnXvM) (interesting version)

✦ Benediction (Numbers 6:24-26)  
*The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you  
and be gracious to you;  
the LORD turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.*



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## Seek ye first

SEEK YE FIRST Irregular

D F#m G D G D Asus4-3

1. Seek ye first the king - dom of God and his right-eous - ness,  
2. Ask, and it shall be giv-en un-to you; seek and ye shall find;  
3. We do not live by bread a - lone, but by eve - ry word

D F#m G D G D Asus4-3 D

and all these things shall be add-ed un-to you.  
knock, and the door shall be o-pened un-to you. Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia!  
that pro - ceeds from the mouth of God.

Words: Karen Lafferty (1948-) Music: Karen Lafferty (1948-) CCLI #4440603

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## How firm a foundation

ST. DENIO 11 11 11 11

G C Am D Em G/D D 7 G

1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
 2. "Fear not, I am with thee; oh be not dismayed!  
 3. "When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
 4. "When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
 5. "The soul that on Je - sus hath leaned for re - pose

C Am D Em G/D D 7 G

is laid for your faith in God's ex - cel - lent word!  
 For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
 the riv - ers of woe shall not thee o - ver - flow,  
 my grace, all - suf - fi - cient, shall be thy sup - ply:  
 I will not— I will not— de - sert to his foes;

D/F# G (/B) G Em G/B D

What more can God say than to you hath been said,  
 I'll strength-en thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand  
 for I will be with thee, thy trou - bles to bless,  
 the flames shall not hurt thee; I on - ly de - sign  
 that soul, though all hell should en - deav - our to shake,

B Em Am D Em G/D D 7 G

to you that for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?  
 up - held by my right-eous, om - nip - o - tent hand.  
 and sanc - ti - fy to thee thy deep - est dis - tress.  
 thy dross to con - sume and thy gold to re - fine.  
 I'll nev - er— no, nev - er— no, nev - er for - sake!"

Words: K in Rippon's Selection of Hymns 1787 Music: Welsh hymn

Words: public domain Music: public domain

# 651 Guide us, O thou great Redeemer

CWM RHONDDA 8 7 8 7 4 7 7 with repeats

G C G/B/A G /B /D D G C/E C Am7 G/D D7 G

1. Guide us, O thou great Re-dee-mer, pil - grim through this bar - ren land;  
 2. O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain, whence the heal - ing stream doth flow;  
 3. When we tread the verge of Jor - dan, bid our anx - ious fears sub - side;

G C G/B /A G /B /D D G C/E G/B C6

I am weak, but thou art migh - ty; hold us with thy  
 let the fire and cloud - y pil - lar lead us all our  
 death of death, and hell's de - struc - tion, land us safe on

Words: Welsh, William Williams (1717-1791); translation, William Williams (1/1/-1/91),  
 Peter Williams (1722-1796), alt Music: John Hughes (1873-1932)

Words: public domain Music: public domain

G/D D G D7 (G/D D7) /F# G (D7 G) G/B

power - ful hand: bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,  
 jour - ney through: strong de - liver - er, strong de - liver - er,  
 Ca - naan's side: songs of prais - es, songs of prais - es,

D7/A G D/F# Em7 D /C G/B G C6 G/D D 7 G

feed us now and ev - er - more; feed us now and ev - er - more.  
 be thou still our strength and shield; be thou still our strength and shield.  
 we will ev - er give to thee; we will ev - er give to thee.

ev - er - more,  
 strength and shield,  
 give to thee.



The friendship between the Rev. Dr. Paul McLean and the Rev. Manias Chang Yu-fa began in 2012 when they first started working together on the Bunun Bible translation project, one of the Indigenous languages in Taiwan. In March 2023, they had just finished finalizing the entire translation when Manias was hospitalized. He passed away three months later. Although Manias did not live to see the complete Bunun Bible, his family and friends find comfort in knowing that he knew that his translation work of many years was completed before he passed away. We give thanks for faithful servants. Paul receives support from Presbyterians Sharing for his work in Bible Translation.



DAILY PRAYERS

**Sunday, November 19** On World Toilet Day, we acknowledge the critical importance of sanitation and access to proper toilet facilities. We pray that PWS&D's work will give more communities access to water, sanitation and hygiene.

**Monday, November 20 (Transgender Day of Remembrance)**

We remember those who have died because of transphobic violence. We pray for an end to hatred and commit to creating safer communities where people of all genders can thrive.

**Tuesday, November 21** We pray for the people, ministries and mission of the Presbytery of Temiskaming.

**Wednesday, November 22** We pray for church office administrators and custodians and all those who tend to the daily lives of the structures of congregations.

**Thursday, November 23** We pray for the therapeutic treatment of malnourished children in Haiti and in Somalia through PWS&D's partners, that they may experience healthy recoveries and new beginnings


**Friday, November 24** We pray and give thanks for the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's Indigenous Pinuyumayan District churches as they celebrate 60 years of Christian mission in their area.

**Saturday, November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women)** We pray for all women who are survivors of violence and for those who have lost loved ones to gender-based violence. We pray that we, as a society, commit to working toward achieving safety for all women and an end to misogyny.

# Christmas at Kensington

**Christmas Decorating** - Saturday, Dec. 2 from 6:30 p.m.

**Pot-luck Lunch** - Sunday, Dec. 3 at about 11:30  
(after the 10:30 worship)

**Movie Series** - Fridays   
pizza 6:30, movie at 7 (RRSP appreciated)

Nov 24: Home Alone

Dec 1: Rise of the Guardians

Dec 8: Elf

Dec 15: Muppets Christmas Carol

**Montreal Children's Theatre Community Dinner**

Volunteer to support the community dinner - Sat., Dec. 16

**Christmas Pageant** - Sunday, Dec. 17 at 10:30

This will be an active and joyous time for all ages.

**Blue Christmas: a peaceful service**

Wednesday, Dec. 20 at 7:30 p.m.

Christmas is not always an easy time.

Please join us for this meditative service.

**Community Caroling** - Friday, Dec. 22

with the *Montreal Children's Theatre*

6:30 p.m. Outdoor Caroling or indoor crafts

7:00 p.m. Hot Chocolate & Snacks

7:30 p.m. Carols & choirs around the piano

**Christmas Eve** - Tuesday, Dec. 24 at 7:00 p.m.

A time of lessons and carols, stories and music.

**Christmas Morning** - Wednesday, Dec. 25 at 9:30 a.m.

Pot-Luck breakfast and Carol Sing



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